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A VERY MAD WORLD.

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# A VERY MAD WORLD:

OR,

MYSELF AND MY NEIGHBOUR FAIR.

BY

FRANK HUDSON,

AUTHOR OF

"THE LAST HURDLE: A STORY OF SPORTING AND COURTING,"  
"THE ORIGIN OF PLUM PUDDING," &c.

*IN TWO VOLUMES.*

VOL. I.

London:

WARD AND DOWNEY,

12, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1889.

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PRINTED BY  
KELLY AND CO., MIDDLE MILL, KINGSTON-ON-THAMES :  
AND GATE STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS, W.C.

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McLaughlin 23 Mar, 53

Gen. res. cov. 28.9.51 Dep. 28.9.51



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TO

M. H.

This Book is Dedicated.



# A VERY MAD WORLD.

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## Book 1.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE MADNESS OF THIS WORLD PROVED BEYOND  
A DOUBT.

You have doubtless read and forgotten it, but it is nevertheless quite true that in ancient times a very large sect of philosophers maintained that all men were mad. This belief is still current amongst our greatest madmen, by which I mean our greatest thinkers of the present day. Professor Ball (of Paris, I believe) declares there are millions of people on this planet suffering from some form or another of insanity. But the

professor does not go far enough : the ancients were nearer the truth. Now I am mad—yes, I, Philip Brownlow, J.P., aged forty, of Brownlow House, ——shire, am as mad as a March hare. But I am not a *lunatic*. And here let me state once for all, that there exists as great a difference between lunacy and mere madness as there is between rabies and mere distemper. Yes, I am mad, and pride myself on the fact, for I like to be in the fashion. Everybody with brains is mad. Now Hodge, whose brains are in his horny hands, is *not* mad. Were he so, he would never work like a slave in my fields from early morn till dewy eve for a few shillings per week. No, becoming discontented with his lot, he would trudge up to choking London to seek his fortune, which he would not be very long in finding in jail (if very mad), or in the workhouse (if only middling mad). But Hodge labours under the disadvantage of being sane, and so he works hard, lives on



bread and bacon, and dies of old age. Poor fellow! He has no brains in his head to go mad with.

Those who are blessed with a large amount of brains are very mad—a great deal madder than I can ever hope to be, though I may state, with, I trust, pardonable pride, that I am akin to the Great Napoleon in the matter of window counting, and to Dr. Johnson (grand old madman!) in “step counting.” Indeed, in one point I beat those two illustrious madmen. There, I have said it! My pride has got the better of my modesty, and out it must come. Napoleon only counted the windows in houses; *I* count the number of panes in each window, and (if I enter the house) the number of chairs, tables, pictures and ornaments therein. But, alas! I am very far behind Napoleon in other points. I am not mad enough to think I could conquer the world. As to the great doctor, I have beaten his “step counting” very often by counting

every flagstone which I have stepped on from the Marble Arch to Oxford Circus. One of the strangest facts in this mad world is that the maddest people are the very people who think themselves the sanest. Mayhap, *you*, my dear mad brother, are one of that class? Don't think I wish to flatter—I say *mayhap* you are. If so, don't you think yourself a great deal wiser and more godly than your neighbours? Don't you firmly believe in your heart of hearts that your children are brighter, your house better managed, and yourself a person of superior knowledge and discrimination? You *know* you do: if you did not, you would be a mere brainless sane-man. But you have plenty of brains, my dear mad brother, and that is the reason you are constantly doing things which a costermonger's jackass would deem very foolish.

In nothing do we exhibit our madness to such an extent as in our pastimes and public amusements. Many of us will, under a blazing

June sun, tire ourselves to death (besides running the risk of broken noses) by striking a hard leather ball with a piece of wood, called a bat. Is there the slightest particle of sanity in a football match? Were you ever in one? If not, try it. Let us take our great town amusement—the theatre. The theatre is a place wherein certain men and women appear upon a platform (called a stage) and for the space of some three hours represent themselves to be other people—such as kings, queens, knaves, virtuous maidens, ladies of fashion, &c.; and they love, murder and die; or plot, intrigue and marry; or sing, dance and make vulgar jokes. When the business is finished, a green curtain descends and hides them from your view, you rise from your seat and make the best of your way into the street, while the people who represented themselves to be other people, change their clothes, wash the paint from their faces, and lo! are themselves again. Now, I will take it that you,

my dear mad brother, have been sitting in that part of the theatre which is called the stalls. You could have taken a seat in that part called the pit if you liked. The pit might be styled the "unreserved stalls," it being only separated from the stalls proper by a thin partition about four feet high. To be sure, the pit seats are neither numbered nor cushioned, and moreover are only about a quarter the price of the seats in the stalls ; so of course you could not think of sitting *there*.

No, delightful madman that you are, you go to the stalls, where the lady in the next seat to yours shudders at the sight of some factory girls drinking beer from a bottle in the gallery, as she removes her mantle, displaying a *tout ensemble* in the matter of bosom and neck the sight of which would make that hapless sane-man Hodge blush up to the roots of his carroty hair. Well, the thing called the "play" is over, and the green curtain is very much in evidence.

Why do you strike your hands together in that rapid manner? Oh! you are pleased! I understand: the thing called a "play" has pleased you. That is to say, a certain number of men and women who have appeared before you and who have pretended to be other people, have caused you pleasure, and so you make a crowd-clapper of your hands. Very good: and that gentleman behind you in the pit, what does he mean by imitating the voice of an angry gander? Oh! he is *not* pleased with the thing called a play, and so he makes a noise like a gander. And you, my dear mad brother, and that other mad brother in the pit, both think yourselves sane men! Will you, when you reach home to-night, and are pleased with your light supper, clap your hands together for fully sixty-five seconds? Or will he from the pit there, when *he* gets home and finds the baby squalling, or the water turned off, or some



such displeasing occurrence, will he, imitating the gander, hiss for the same period?

In my old college days I had a "chum" from Ireland, and a madman after mine own heart. The dear fellow thought himself a very Solomon. I have known him to go miles out of his way for the express purpose of procuring what he called "real Irish whisky," and which, in the goodness of his heart, he would invite me to partake of.

"Ah," he would say, "it cost me a journey to get this whisky, Phil, but it is well worth any journey, for it is strong and well-flavoured."

And then, into this strong, well-flavoured whisky, which cost him such a journey, would he pour a spoonful of rum, which took the flavour away, hot water, which took its strength away, sugar to sweeten it, and then a bit of lemon to make it bitter again.

How often will those who are mad enough to know better rave about the wisdom of

certain people who have made a noise in the world. They will cite Bacon. Well, Bacon was the greatest philosopher who ever lived. Was *he* sane? Perish the thought! Were he a brainless sane-man do you think he would stop his coach on a bleak morning in Highgate, and quit its warm interior to stuff a chicken with snow, thereby catching a cold which killed him? And Izaak Walton, “the gentle and the wise”—how about him? Was there anything very gentle in killing a harmless necessary cat for the mere purpose of baiting a fishhook with part of its entrails? Was there anything very wise in the old man leaving his warm bed at two o’clock on a rainy morning to go fishing for a logger-headed chub, which when caught he would bestow upon the first red-cheeked milkmaid who sang him a song by Kit Marlow? Was Byron sane when he started the *Liberal*? Was Voltaire sane when he fancied himself superior to Shakespeare? or Walpole when

he collected bits of old iron? or Frederic the Great when he thought himself a poet? or Charles the First when he went to arrest Pym and Hampden? or—but why continue further? Have I not said enough to show that it is a mad world, my masters? And the worst of it is that sane men have not brains enough to mend it.



## CHAPTER II.

### CASES OF MADNESS AMONG THE LOWER ORDERS.

It is snowing like old Harry, but as I am seated in my library with a good blazing fire before me what do I care? Let all the birds, beasts and fishes throughout my broad domain do what they can to keep themselves comfortable. With this wish——

The entrance of my housekeeper interrupted me just now. She came to tell me that Sally and Tom are going to be married, and that, please, they have given a month's warning. It's very odd—in fact it's most extraordinary. It is the first time I have met with the case of two people in the lower order of life being gifted with madness. What are we coming to when groom and housemaid are endowed with brains? Tom is a capital

groom, and can doctor a horse as well as any V.S. in the market; I allow him thirty pounds a year, with board, lodging and livery. He is young—not more than twenty-five, and should he elect to remain in my service until he was, say, fifty, just calculate what a nice little sum he could save to open a little public house with. Sally is about twenty, neat and pretty. She receives twenty pounds a year and “all found.” Now these two young persons are going to cast from them all these advantages for the sake of matrimony. Once married, as they are well aware, their careers as domestic servants are ruined. How are they going to exist? How are all the little Toms and Sallies—ex servants are extravagant in that way—going to exist? Do the mad couple know or care? Not they; it is only sane people who bother themselves about such matters.

Talking of my housekeeper, she is an Irishwoman. The fact is I have been greatly



troubled in my time in the matter of house-keepers. I think I had six, all told, ere I secured Mrs. Murphy's services ; all were well up to their duties, but were every one of them a little shaky over their "r's." They were a peg above those humble people who are misers with their "h's," but they went in very heavy with the "r's." One of them, the youngest of the lot, was always talking about her par, and the very next one I engaged told me her mar was a real lady.

Now my cook the other morning in my hearing called Tom "an impurent feller," but I don't mind that. My cook and I seldom engage in conversation of any length ; with my housekeeper it is quite different, and I will not endure one who cannot pronounce her own language when speaking to me. Hence Mrs. Murphy. She has a delicious Dublin (county) brogue, which reminds me of Mrs. Boucicault. Some connoisseurs prefer the Cork brogue, others are charmed

with the Limerick, while some are blessed with ears to which even the Galway and Antrim brogues are music. Now, having travelled a great deal through that very mad island, called Ireland, I flatter myself that I am a bit of a judge of brogues, and I say without fear or favour that the County Dublin, County Waterford and County Louth brogues are the pick of the basket. I wish some great professor would, during a lucid interval, explain how it comes that the purest English is spoken in Dublin, and also why the peasantry of Munster and Leinster speak Elizabethan English almost in its purity. When the professor explains us all this, he might then give a lecture on the extraordinary correctness of the pronunciation of *foreign* words by the Irish peasants all over the country from Dublin to Cork.

Well, about this housekeeper of mine—she is awfully sane, though she *once* showed symptoms of the highest order of intellect.

Yes, on one occasion she acted like a sensible madwoman. Her only son, who is as mad as mad can be—his late father was a whisky-taster in the Customs—took it into his head to enlist. Upon hearing of this Mrs. Murphy cried herself nearly blind, and then informed my butler (of whom more anon) that as her son had disgraced his family by enlisting, she had resolved to disown him. Meanwhile, Pat Murphy was ordered off to the wars, and after helping to shoot down a few blacks, returned to Woolwich with his regiment. Immediately after his arrival he wrote to his mother, who after glancing over the letter put it into the fire, and never answered it. A very determined woman is Mrs. Murphy. Her son was dead to her—he had disgraced his family by donning a red coat. Three months later another letter came from Pat, stating that he had been made a corporal, and had been awarded a medal, and containing his

photograph with the corporal stripes on his arm and the medal on his breast. Then did Mrs. Murphy's interval of madness take place. "What do you think, sur," she exclaimed to me with pride and pleasure beaming all over her face, "but me son Pat is a corporal, a full corporal, with strips and all, and a beautiful medal; there is his likeness, sur, which he sent me." She ended by asking my permission to go to Woolwich to see him. I wonder what would become of Mrs. Murphy if her son had been made a major, or even a captain? Her madness would then culminate in lunacy, and Colney Hatch would be her portion.

Do you like dinner-parties? I hate them. One has to endure them, but in my private opinion the people who give them ought all to be hanged, drawn and quartered. I am reluctantly compelled to make one at a dinner-party to-morrow evening. The friends who are responsible for the infernal thing

are near neighbours, Sir James Walls and his moon-faced wife, Lady Walls—why will people insist on giving the title “Lady” to a baronet’s wife? “Dame” is the correct title. Lady Walls is almost as mad as her husband, and lost a stone and a half in weight last season because she was not invited to the State Ball. But she could well afford it.



## CHAPTER III.

### I DINE OUT.

A MISERABLE February evening: roads almost impassable with snow, bitter wind blowing from the north. Just the evening to sit by one's warm fireside. This being so, and for no other reason that I can think of, these Walls invite us all to journey in the cold from all parts of the county for the express purpose of *eating* at their table. Here we are then, men and women, cooped up in this dining-room, having journeyed thither in closed carriages over the snow-blocked roads at the rate of three miles an hour. Heaven help the poor women going home to-night, for they are in full dinner dress, which means little dress at all. Look at that old hag, Mrs. Tatte-Snarlow, with

half the top part of her wrinkled body bare, and with a diamond necklace encircling her scraggy neck, the vulgar old creature! She was a beauty in her youth. I well remember her twenty-five years ago, just after her marriage with Mr. Thomas Tatte, a barrister in a very large way of business—he was making upwards of twenty thousand a year, and had purchased Brief Hall, an adjacent property. Mrs. Tatte was the daughter of the Reverend Jacob Slow, who preached soporific sermons in our parish church for thirty years, and then died of the gout. Strange as it appears, this clergyman had only one child. Well, as none of the male members of the county families made a bid, Julia married the common barrister, and became mistress of Brief Hall. She has four gawky sons, and three sharp-nosed daughters—there they were, gazing with silent rapture on the handsome features of young Cornhurst, who is heir to thirty

thousand acres and an earldom. But why Tatte-*Snarlow*? I know there is a phase of madness amongst the middle classes, which consists of an absorbing desire to have as many names as possible. But why *Snarlow*? that's what bothers me. Must find out all about it.

Yes, here we are, men in white ties like a lot of waiters or parsons, and swallow-tail coats like Christy Minstrels, while the women are resplendent in the latest dinner costumes. And we are all *feeding*. That's what we are all dressed to death for—for the purpose of feeding. Think of it. Have you ever known a gloomy cow, or a corpulent pig, write to other cows or pigs, asking them to come a distance of so many miles over snowy roads for the express purpose of swallowing cut grass, or mashed mangolds? You know you never have. All animals are dreadfully sane, save those, like the dog, who dwell much among men. Such animals occasionally go mad, as a matter of course.



A diminutive object attached to a large moustache is seated opposite me. He is our M.F.H. Now, this creature has a rent-roll of forty thousand per annum, most of which he spends on race-horses, while the remainder goes for sealskin jackets and diamond earrings. Said jackets and ear-rings are bestowed upon ladies whose love is extremely catholic. Our M.F.H. is quite aware of the fact. He is also aware that his racers never win any races—indeed, many of the animals he has never seen, his trainer being generally the purchaser. The latter buys and sells his patron's horses just as he pleases. Forty thousand a year on worthless women and useless horses! And yet we give this man the important post of master of our fox-hounds. To be sure he pays all expenses, but still the fact remains that he spends forty thousand a year on worthless objects. Watch how all the young ladies beam upon him. Forty thousand a year, my dear, and

only think of him buying those horrid women in London, and we pure, well-bred county girls dying to sell ourselves to him. Of course, none of us would think of selling ourselves in that off-hand careless fashion affected by those horrid London women. No, we must have a hoop of gold put on our finger, and the clergyman must read something called a marriage service, and we must shed copious tears when kissing mamma, and all that sort of thing, you know. How lucky for *us* none of those horrid London creatures insisted on all that ceremony!

Ah! you dear English girls, with your native dignity, innocence and grace, there is a lot of method in your madness. One of you will capture our poor little M.F.H., and then woe betide him if he is caught investing in sealskin jackets. His moustache won't save him.

Little Mrs. Wilson is on my right, her wicked black eyes sparkling, and her face

all over dimples. Are you aware that dimply women are scarce now-a-days? They are dying out like those flaxen-haired beauties, that were

“Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks  
In Vallombrosa——”

some twenty years ago, and who are as scarce now as the chough and ruff. They were a dangerous breed. Dimplly little widows, like Mrs. Wilson here, were also very much to the fore some years ago; they are—or were—a good-natured species. Little Mrs. Wilson is very wealthy, and her estate joins mine on the north side.

Look at that tall, beardless, creamy-faced hobbledohoy of a fellow, with his pretty little golden-haired wife sitting between him and the M.F.H. He looks foolish enough to be a sane man, but not so—he is very mad. He is the Duke of Stanton (we call him the Young Duke), and his pretty little

wife hails from America. He does not care a straw for her, but being poor, for a duke, he sold his title to a Chicago heiress. Does *she* care for the owner of the costly purchase? Not the ghost of a bit; she is as free from love as a frog from feathers—that is so far as her husband is concerned. Her grace, as I have stated, is a Chicago lady, and the daughter of a very wealthy potted-meat manufacturer. I presume that is the reason she is a prominent member of our local Primrose League, which numbers ten members, all told; they are all married ladies. They have no families. Now will you just think, you people who imagine yourselves sane—just reflect on the picture of your wives meeting together in a room, and then rising one after another to gabble on what they know nothing about. At present all our Primrose Dames are more or less rabid on the Home Rule question. Good heavens! What do

childless wives, who leave their silent homes to the care of servants, while they go abroad making foolish speeches—what *do* they know about Home Rule?

“Did you read my speech on Home Rule, Mr. Brownlow?” asked her grace the other day. I had not, and said so.

“Oh! you should have done so,” she went on; “it was very well reported in the *Morning Mail*. They sent down a reporter specially.”

“Did they indeed? That was very enterprising. By the way, was your grace ever in Ireland?”

“Ireland!” with a shudder. “No, thanks; I don’t wish to run the chance of being shot from behind a hedge.”

“Have you ever read Irish history, duchess?”

“I never knew there was such a thing.”

I thought not.

“Just fancy those horrid Irish wanting to

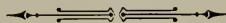
manage their own affairs," further remarked her grace. "Did you ever *hear* of anything so absurd, Mr. Brownlow? As if we English would think of allowing such a thing!"

"*We* English might do worse," I said. "*You* Americans have got on very well without us."

"Oh! you talk nonsense," she snapped, with an angry flush—just because I called her an American. Fancy the daughter of a great republican jobber getting angry on being called an American.

\* \* \* \* \*

This confounded dinner is over, thank heaven!



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BUTLER AND THE BLUEBOTTLE.

WHEN Ruskin escapes from the clouds, and comes down among his brother madmen, he speaks words of burning madness — ay, words whose mighty truth could only emanate from a madman of the highest order. Note his giving the common house-fly as the highest type of courage. The thing looks ridiculous at first blush, does it not? “As brave as a bluebottle” does not seem a very high-sounding compliment, and yet what hero ancient or modern was, or is, as brave as a bluebottle? Why, my dear sir (or madam), a healthy bluebottle has not even an idea of fear. He fears *nothing*. If you succeed in frightening a bluebottle, write to the *Times* at once, and tell them how you did

it. You are sure to be made a baronet at least, and very probably be granted a pension out of the Literary Fund.

Now, I take it that no one will contradict me when I state that the common bluebottle fly is as mad as a March hare. This is one of the causes of his marvellous bravery. But there is another cause, and I think I have discovered it: *the bluebottle has no liver*—at least, none that I could discover with a powerful microscope. You have no idea what effect the liver has on one's courage. Another fact which proves, beyond a doubt, the absence of liver in the bluebottle is his superhuman digestive powers. He fears no food of any description, and thinks nothing of fourteen or fifteen different courses for breakfast. Now as a sample. It is the 6th of March and a "pet day"—sun shining warm and bright through my breakfast-room window, almost killing the fire in the grate. Mr. Bluebottle has awakened from his slum-



ber, and the beautiful weather has tempted him to come from his retreat—somewhere near the top of the further window—and partake of some breakfast. After buzzing round my head for a spell, he lit on my hand; from thence he flew to the ham and eggs, and had a good banquet there; from that to the sugar, where he gorged himself for fully three minutes, and then he attacked the butter, and from that to the jam dish; then back to my hand once more. I brush him off, and with a buzz he settles on the cream-jug, and has a good minute's draught—fancy cream on the top of ham and eggs! I have long since given up the idea of either killing him or frightening him. Neither can be done. The cream has only renewed his appetite, and once more he attacks the ham. So steady and still does he work, that one would imagine him dead. Dead! off he is again to the sugar. After that he tries the butter, jam, bread, and cream once more

in succession. Bless my soul, what a glorious stomach! Is it any wonder he fears nothing on the face of the earth?

My reason for mentioning this fly is born of the fact that he is a great source of annoyance to my butler. I think I have mentioned that my butler suffers from saneness to a terrible extent; the taint is, I believe, hereditary; his father, whom I remember quite well, being also a martyr to saneness. Well, my butler has had several battles with my gormand bluebottle, but has always come off second best.

“Drat that fly, sir!” he exclaimed to me one morning. “I can’t hit him nohow, and he takes delight in putting me out.”

To the sane mind of my butler, a spade is a spade, and a fly is a fly. I remember one evening last August we had a Turner-esque sunset—the whole west,

“Not, as in Northern climes, obscurely bright,  
But one unclouded glow of living light.”

Seen from my study window, the effect was unutterably glorious. My butler happening to enter as I stood by the window, I cried, "Wilkins, is it not beautiful?"

"Which, sir?"

"The sunset."

"Sunset, sir? Oh, yes, sir." And he looked at me suspiciously. He thought I was mad. He was correct. What is there beautiful about a sunset? Why should I call it glorious? It is all delusive reflection. Whether is a Turneresque sunset, all pink and gold, or a scowling sky and a sea white with rage, the more glorious? Ask the petrel: he will vote for the scowling sky, the howling wind and the boiling sea, I'll go bail. I once witnessed a sudden squall at sea, as I sat safe on a harbour wall. The squall occurred at about the distance of a mile from the shore. I saw the smiling sea—it was in August—suddenly lashed to fury, and in its mad rage, I saw

it gobble up a bridal party in a pleasure boat, and just behind my back were rows of unhired pleasure boats nodding to sleep in the quiet harbour. That squall was a glorious sight—seen from a distance. The bridal party were too close to it. I wonder how we would fare if we managed to get well into the middle of a Turneresque sunset?

But to return to my butler and the blue-bottle. The feud has been long and bitter on one side, at least. But just now Wilkins entered, and opening the top of one of the windows, out flew his enemy.

“That bluebottle fly has flew out, sir,” he said with a smile of quiet satisfaction, as he proceeded to open the top of the other window, when in flew the bluebottle through it. He had only gone out for a slight airing. I never saw a man so “taken back” as my butler was. He was actually struck speechless when that fly lit on his nose. There is nothing like silencing your enemy’s guns.

## CHAPTER V.

### EXIT WILKINS.

MR. JOHN CARTER called to see me to-day. He is on a visit at the Rectory. Carter is a composer—writes music for songs. He is not clever enough—I mean he has not brains enough to be quite as mad as the great composers, but he is mad enough in all conscience. Although his name is John Carter he signs himself “Victor D’Alton.” I wonder if French song composers give themselves English names. Can it really be that Englishmen, like some parvenu Irishmen, are ashamed of their own names? Remember this: men of birth, members of old families, are always proud of their names, especially in Ireland and Scotland. It is the parvenus of both countries who seek to change their

names. The O'Donnells, landed gentry, are proud of that O' as can well be; but the Donnells, wife and daughter of the late Dr. O'Donnel, M.D., cut the O' from their name. This is the madness begot of ignorance and low birth. I heard of a medical man in Cork whose real name was Muldoon, but who changed it to Maldon! Now, Muldoon happens to be one of the most aristocratic names in Ireland. A county family with that name would hold their heads very high indeed. But this parvenu pill-maker preferred Maldon. Ah! well, all this is by the way.

As to this man Carter, he sat for nearly an hour telling me his woes. And what do you think these woes consisted of? Listen:

“Would you believe it, Mr. Brownlow, were I to tell you that I have been invited down here under false pretences?” he exclaimed, with a mad glare in his sky-blue eyes. “You know that the parson is one of my oldest friends, in fact I may state that

I was his wife's first sweetheart. Well, he wrote to me last week inviting me down to The Rectory, stating that the quietude of a country house would enable me to get through my new set of hymns—words by Lady Gosling—in less than no time; the gaiety, and constant round of visitors and visiting must distract you dreadfully, he added. Well, Mr. Brownlow, I came. Do you think I have been able to do any work on those hymns since? No, sir, not a damned note. On the very day after my arrival I had just sat down in my room to compose, when up came one of the servants—‘Please, sir, there are visitors in the drawing-room.’ Down I had to go and listen to the jabber of a gouty major and his two lanky daughters for fully half-an-hour. When they were gone I was at liberty to return to my desk. I don't believe I was at work ten minutes when up came the servant with a request for my presence in the drawing-room



once more. Down I had to trot to be introduced to Mrs. and the Misses Jones, of Mountjones. Mrs. and the Misses Jones jabbered for half-an-hour on the eldest Miss Jones's forthcoming marriage with some one or other, and then *they* retired. Back to my desk again, but only for a few minutes, for Mrs. Snarlow Tatti, or Totti Snarlow, or whatever the devil the woman's name is, arrived with *her* daughters, and of course I was summoned to their presence. Have you ever seen Mrs. Barlow Snatti, or whatever her name is? Yes? Then you know what she is? Fancy my being dragged down all the way from London to be introduced to a thing like that!"

"Very annoying, certainly," I observed.

"Annoying! I should think it *was*, and by the Lord Harry I won't stand it. I'll leave for London to-morrow."

And away he went. That man has a great grievance. The impertinent presumption of



dragging your guest down to the drawing-room every time a chance acquaintance calls on you should be punished with imprisonment. Parvenues think it is "good form" to act thus, but they are quite wrong in this, as they are in nearly every other question of etiquette. The case stands thus:—A invites B to his country house. B is averse to strange faces, and besides has some literary or musical work to do. A says to himself, "I know B is coming down to my house for the sake of quietude, I know he detests strange faces, and has a horror of being introduced to people, yet I will compel him, when I get him here, to come into my reception room every time any of my casual acquaintances call. I will compel him to talk to them and listen to their talk. It is good form."

Is it? In Royal Charles's time it was thought good form to seduce your neighbour's wife or daughter. Indeed, there are

some old-fashioned men who believe in that species of good form still. Talking of wives, my groom and housemaid quitted my service to go and get married yesterday.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is no time in a man's life so enjoyable as that period of half-an-hour with a good cigar after a well-cooked and well-served dinner. "That's it, Wilkins, stir up the fire, the east-wind has set in for the year."

I really believe Wilkins to be the best butler extant. The longer he remains with me the better he gets—just like this port. How softly he has closed the door behind him, and how well he attended at table this evening; almost better than ever, I thought. My butler must be getting on in years—nearly fifty I should say, though his clean-shaved face and placid life makes him appear much younger. Ah, what it is to be sane, and without any care! Proud as I am of my madness, I sometimes wish I was

as free from bother and worry as my very sane butler. That reminds me, I must see if he has received his new livery from town.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have actually rung the bell *twice*, and no appearance of Wilkins. Enter Mrs. Murphy, white as a sheet.

“Oh, sur, poor Wilkins!”

“Well, what about him? I have rung for him twice.”

“Oh, sur, he’ll never come again. He’s hung himself in his bedroom.”

“What?” I exclaim, starting to my feet.

“Hung himself, sur. Pray do come up and look at him.”

I hasten up to the man’s room. Yes, he has hanged himself sure enough. The cord which bound the box containing his new livery did the business. He drove a stout “holdfast” into the wall, about eight feet from the ground, and fastened one end of the rope to it, making the fatal noose

on the other. And so he hangs, the idiot! And I took him for a brainless sane-man. What can have——what's this piece of paper on the table? A half sheet of note-paper, upon which is written in pencil, "I was sweet on Sallie."

The confounded idiot! He was sweet on Sallie, indeed! He never let any one suspect the existence of this deep madness. No one knew of it, not even Sallie, the drivelling idiot! Had I known he intended doing this I would have dismissed him on the spot. Where *am* I to find such another butler? Were it not that he is quite dead I would get him six months' imprisonment. He was sweet on Sallie! And he accordingly hangs himself in *my* house, and in *my* livery. Fancy this man, whom I trusted so well, playing me this dirty trick—disgracing my house by a suicide. There will be a horrible nuisance to-morrow in the shape of an inquest. My poor carpets!

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING LITTLE.

THANK Heaven all that bother about Wilkins is over, and his body safe out of the house. Little Mrs. Wilson called on me yesterday to ask my opinion on the best mode of investing twenty thousand pounds, which she has lying idle in the bank. What does she take me for—a stock broker? I told her to consult her solicitor. Her private income is about six thousand a year; she has no family, and yet she is anxious to make more money! Next she wanted to know what colours I preferred. Crimson and purple are my favourite colours, though why she should want to know is a mystery. Next, she asked me to go over and have a look at her new conservatory, which she

was sure I should like. After I had promised to go, she thought of the late Wilkins.

“Poor man, just fancy him committing suicide in that fashion,” she exclaimed, trying to look sorry. “So romantic, his loving the housemaid. But why did he not tell the girl?” And the little widow’s face became dimply. “Women like being proposed to, though they pretend they don’t.” And the dimples became more dimply than ever.

“You must feel lonely at times in Virgemont?” I remarked.

“Oh, very,” she replied. “I sometimes think of having a companion. Don’t you feel lonely sometimes in this great house?”

“Not often. I have my books.”

“I *hate* books!” she exclaimed, rising to go.

Well, as I promised to run over to Virgemont and look at the confounded conservatory, I suppose I had better keep my promise, and have it over.

Virgemont is certainly a charming place—not so stately and old as my place, but still beautiful after its own way. Little Mrs. Wilson insisted on showing me all over the house and gardens, while she kept asking my opinion on one thing and another. The conservatory is well built, and filled with choice flowers.

“What is your favourite flower?” she asked me.

“The crimson rose,” was my truthful answer. And now let me state, once for all, that in my private opinion the crimson rose, for beauty, equals all other flowers put together.

After luncheon I quitted Virgemont. What a jolly little woman its mistress is! On my way home I suddenly came upon our little M.F.H.—by the way, the little creature’s name is Towers—Walter Towers. He was standing by a stile, talking to Susan Hemming, his gardener’s daughter. Susan



is the belle of the village—tall and handsome, with big black eyes and rich chestnut hair. She stands head and shoulders over little Towers. On seeing me the latter joined me in my walk homewards.

“I was just asking that girl how her father was,” he said. “Poor man, he has been confined to his house with rheumatism for the last month.”

“Sorry to hear that,” I said. “He has no one to look after him, has he?”

“No one, except his daughter,” answered Towers, lighting a cigar. “I sometimes go and sit with the old chap for a while.”

“That’s very kind of you.”

“Yes.”

We parted at my gates. Wonder the little chap is not captured. Never saw a man escape so miraculously before. I believe every girl in the county has had a shot at him, but all missed. Perhaps he’s too small to be hit. What a lot of us



escape scot free in this world, just because we are too small to be hit by any of the slings or arrows of outrageous fortune. Which would you prefer being, an English gardener, or a Russian Czar? But then, why ask mad people such a question? When I was very young, and ere my brains had become developed enough to make me the madman I now have the honour of being, I used to envy the life of the domestic cat. I thought he, or she—but especially *he*—had the most careless, happy, well-fed and delightful an existence of anything human or animal on the face of this planet. And I am not quite sure that I don't half believe it still. Just think of the life of a well-fed cat in a comfortable house? Even the newest fashion in lady's lap dogs leads a miserable life in comparison.

Do you think that if Tom was a big animal, like a cow or a horse, he would have such a pleasant time of it?

Little Mrs. Wilson sent me a bouquet of crimson roses to-day. Good-natured little creature! She must have sent to London for them. There is not a single crimson rosebud in Virgemont. Strange that the little widow is not married. I have heard of several proposals, none of which seem to have been acceptable. Perhaps she is hard to please; though certainly the late Mr. Wilson was not a wonder. But then, he was the master of Virgemont and six thousand a year.



## CHAPTER VII.

### A SUGGESTION.

IF there is one madhouse more than another which I am fond of visiting, it is the House of Commons. Now, my dear mad brother, just try to become sane for one moment, and consider the delightful insanity of a lot of men, chattering like a flock of magpies in a pine wood, day after day—or night after night—one side of the House proving again and again, beyond a doubt, that every word spoken on the other side of the House is false, mischievous, and calculated to ruin the country. Think of the money, time, ease and comfort parted with, for the sake of obtaining a seat amongst these silly chatterers! Remember this: no commercial man—I don't

care what line of business he is in—should ever be tolerated in Parliament. Such a man is sure to vote according to the interest of his especial trade, rather than the interest of his country. Never believe for one instant that there is any patriotism about business men. A Birmingham small arms manufacturer will sell guns to his country's greatest enemy, and will from his seat (if he has one) in the House swell every war measure with his vote. I don't think it safe to allow so many professional people into Parliament; but they are not so dangerous as the commercial member. We county people enter Parliament as our fathers did before us. We are born to it. We have our country and its broad acres at heart. I don't care what we are, Liberal or Conservative, Whig or Tory, we have only one desire—to see England great and prosperous; and to that end we fight for her well-being in Parliament, while our

sons fight for her on land and sea, sword in hand. It is not *we* who chatter like apes and bray like asses. We seldom speak, but we "vote solid." Success and long life to the county party! Free from all items of commerce, we are consequently free from all bias and jobbery. We enter Parliament as leaders of our people. We are minor kings, every one of us—our subjects are our tenants. Parliament is our sole business. Mind, we are madmen all the same; but what is our madness in comparison to that of the shoddy people? People who let their business go to the dogs, for the sake of sticking "M.P." after their names! Mad they all are—but what is their madness compared to the madness of their electors?

I wish you *would* just try, my dear mad brother or sister, to fathom the awful depth of idiotcy exhibited by the intelligent Englishmen who returned for Slocum Podger, as

member of the greatest legislative assembly in the world, Mr. Tallow, the eminent soap boiler. What affinity is there between soap boiling and law making? None; and that is the very reason Mr. Tallow is elected by his fellow madmen. I have always noticed that Mr. Tallow, and his kind, announce themselves as Conservative. We, the country party, dislike our political opinions being embraced by Messrs. Tallow and Co., but there is no help for it. Have you ever noticed what Conservatism means as understood by the lower classes—your Conservative mechanic and Conservative soap boiler? Their idea of Conservatism is, “Down with Ireland.” That’s the sum total of it. And they really believe Conservatism to mean that, and nothing else. Get into conversation with a “Conservative” tinker, and before he speaks half-a-dozen words he will mention something about “them bloomin’ hoirish.” The lower middle classes—at least, the Conservative portion of

them—are just the same. It is only among the upper classes that Conservatism has its true meaning—a mad meaning of course—but still, not so mad as the meaning held by the lower classes.

The last time I sat in the House of Commons a grand old madman spoke of the Irish peasantry paying their rent with the greatest punctuality, save and except when they were starving. How all the Tallows and their brother shoddy Conservatives did laugh to be sure! Ah! Messrs. Shoddy and Co., I wonder would *you* starve yourselves to pay your debts? No, *no*, no! *I* know you all. You would see your creditors to the devil first. Good God! have I not seen a whole family of Galway peasantry living on *seaweed*? Think of that when you go home to dinner, Messrs. Tallow and Co. Seaweed for breakfast, seaweed for dinner, and seaweed for supper; while every penny the poor creatures could earn went to the landlord of



their miserable mud hovel. A mad world, is it not, my masters?

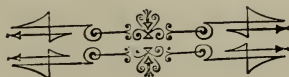
The chief cause of all these remarks is her Grace of Stanton. She has been making a long speech, more or less through her nose, at a recent Primrose meeting, the subject being, of course, Ireland. It has always been my private opinion that there should be a stringent law against women meddling in politics. If there is one thing in this world which women know least about, it is the politics of their own country. I remember reading of a Ladies' Land League in Ireland; its members were mostly (as in our Primrose League) old maids and childless wives, besides being Radicals to a man—no, to a woman I mean. One is not surprised at anything ladies may do when they become Radicals, and fail to become wives and mothers; and besides—what other amusement is there for them in a coerced country? If they went to a dance they ran the chance of



being batoned by police, as an unlawful assembly, or of being shot in the legs—women *have* legs—by moonlighters as a *too* lawful assembly. The case is different here in England. The ladies who call themselves Primrose dames are the wives and daughters of Conservatives, and ought to know better—at least, their husbands or fathers should know better. I firmly believe that a law should be passed—indeed I am convinced that but for our madness, such a law *would* be passed—for providing each married lady with two children, boy and girl; for no matter what you say, a wife minus children is sure to nurture fads. Should these fads be nurtured in secret, there is mischief brewing. Fads, secret or open, she *will* have, unless she is sane. And how many sane women are there in the world? Touching this bill, I would have a fund of children provided by the state. There are thousands of children going to waste all over the country, and

thousands of parents have more than they well know what to do with. Why, if the Government sent a properly worded circular to all the curates in the three kingdoms, I'll wager anything replies would come in by return of post offering contributions to the fund, to the amount of, at least, two thousand assorted children. Those specimens, supplied by the curates, should be presented to well-to-do Conservative wives. Another circular to the British workmen would bring in at least ten thousand children to the fund; those should be meted out to Radical and Liberal wives. Mark my words well, nor think I am joking—if you want to keep Englishwomen in their homes and away from public platforms, and other forms of mischief, there is only one talisman required: it consists of a specimen of that aggregate of phosphorus and blubber called a baby. The worst of it is that babies are rather brittle, and consequently liable to danger while travelling;

therefore I would suggest that the Government should deal only in children from seven to eight years of age. Yes, I know what you are thinking—"Why, the man is mad!" I am proud to say I AM. I, Philip Brownlow, am as mad as a hatter; and you, my dear brothers and sisters, are all in the same condition, only you have not studied yourselves well enough to be aware of the fact.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER.

LITTLE Mrs. Wilson called upon me yesterday and wanted to know if I would advise her to sell Virgemont and leave England for France. This was a puzzle to me. How do I know whether it would be advisable to live in France or not? However, I said, "If you have a desire to live in France, by all means do so: life is short, and this is the more reason we should spend it how and where we liked best."

I think that was very sound advice, and yet the woman seemed annoyed, and snapped out, "I dare say you would be glad to get rid of me."

Now, is there any pleasing a woman? Here was this dimply creature in crimson

and black—rather becoming, by-the-way—who had driven over for the express purpose of asking my advice upon a subject of which I knew nothing, and when I endeavoured to give her the best advice I could, she exclaimed that I wanted to get rid of her! I am aware, of course, that she is very mad; but still she ought to possess a shade of common-sense now and again. However, after a few moments her good-humour returned, and she asked me if I would go over to Virgemont and see her dog Dash, who was not at all well. This staggered me for a moment. What will she ask me to do next? Takes me for a dog doctor now! I promised to go, of course, and then she rose to leave. What small feet and ankles the little creature has! I caught sight of them—couldn't well help it—as I assisted her into the carriage. Dark crimson stockings. Pity the little woman has no family. True, she is not a Primrose

Dame, or anything of that sort. But trust me, for all that she is up to some mischief. I could see it in her eye.

I have been to-day to visit her dog Dash, a Gordon setter. He is suffering from too much food and too little exercise, but the little widow said, "What exercise can *I* give him? I cannot shoot partridges." She is not going to France after all, she thinks. I told her that should she be anxious to dispose of Virgemont, I would be happy to become its owner at twenty years' purchase. I don't particularly want it, but goodness knows what successful Stock Exchange gambler or eminent brewer might get hold of it if it went into the market. However, little Mrs. Wilson thinks she will not sell it, though, as she has told me several times, "it is very lonely for her."

On my way homewards I wanted a light for my cigar, so entered Hemming's cottage for the purpose of procuring one. There sat

old Hemming by the fire, looking very ill, poor old fellow. There also sat little Towers, while Susan, with a very heightened colour, busied herself doing nothing about the room. What a magnificent specimen of womanhood the girl is!

I was certainly surprised—agreeably surprised—at little Towers taking such an interest in his gardener. I did not believe it was in him to take an interest in anything.

“Well, Hemming, how are you to-day?” I asked, as Susan handed me a chair and Towers looked at his watch. It was the latter who answered:

“Oh, he feels much better to-day. We will have him all right by next week.”

“The maister he be very koind to I and Susan, sir,” said the old fellow, turning to me, and making little Towers actually blush.

“Oh, you’ll be all right presently,” he said, rising to go. “Susan will come up to the

House this evening and take back the things the doctor said you should have. You won't forget," he said, turning to the girl.

"No, sir," she answered, rather quickly I thought.

Expect she did not half like the idea of taking anything home from the House. It looked like charity. Towers was with me part of the way home.

"You seem to take a great interest in your gardener," I remarked.

"Do you think so?"

"Well, yes; honestly, Towers, I did not think it was in you."

"Oh! thanks, very much," he observed smiling.

"I had no idea you were such a man of feeling." Why the little object should become annoyed at this is more than I can understand.

"I don't see why I should not look after my gardener without being chaffed for it!"



he exclaimed. "There is nothing to be ashamed of."

"No ; nothing," my dear boy. I am not chaffing you, I assure you ; don't think so for a moment. I merely said that I did not think you had so much thought. And now here are my gates. Good-evening."

Just fancy the little beggar losing his little temper because I told him he was better than I thought he was ! Madman that he is—why, he ought to have been highly complimented. But little men are like little dogs—they often snap at the hand that pats them. Hope the little beggar will be captured by one of the Tatte-Snarlow gang.

That reminds me : knowing that the widow knows everything in connection with everybody, I asked her the meaning of *Snarlow*.

"Oh ! *don't* you know ?" she asked in surprise.

"No, I don't."

"Why, Mrs. Tatte discovered that the late

Sir Alfred Snarlow was a distant connection of an aunt of her mother's, so she advertised in the *Times* and *Morning Post*, stating that she, Mrs. Tatte, of Briefley Hall, so-and-so, would for the future adopt the name of her late relative—I think she called him a great-uncle—Sir Anthony Snarlow, Bart.”

So you see the mystery is solved.



## CHAPTER IX.

### NATURE WILL BE NATURE STILL.

As everybody is leaving for town—we are now in April—I suppose I must do likewise. I would much rather remain here and see the trees burst their buds, but that would never do. People would begin to think I could not afford to go up for the season. No, no! much as I long for the country in May, I must perforce hie me to London town. I am not compelled to go, I don't want to go, but I must go or my neighbours might think I couldn't go. All this reasoning reminds me of another peculiarity among the middle classes—their terrible fear of what their neighbours might say. I have heard of families of well-to-do professional people living the life of the damned. They dreaded to go out

for a walk lest their next-door neighbour to the right would think it strange to see them out walking. They feared to remain indoors lest their neighbour to the left should wonder what could keep them at home. They were continually buying new clothes so that their neighbours opposite should not imagine they did not follow the fashion. In fact, their whole lives were not spent with any comfort to themselves, but solely with a view to the opinions of their neighbours. It is a curious fact, and one which shows that nature still insists, despite modern Radicalism, in keeping every strata of society in its proper place—that nothing will make the middle classes understand this important fact: the upper classes come and go as they please, and never think for a moment of what their neighbours may or may not choose to say.

Is there anything more funny than your lower middle class, your girl or young man, aping the lady or gentleman? Some of our

female post-office clerks offer a good study in this line. They have got a government situation, and have quite lost their little heads. It never seems to occur to them that they are public, *not* government, servants. They appear to think the public rather a nuisance, and as such, to be treated with the utmost incivility.

“What do you want?” asked one of these creatures, looking up from her novel, in a post office not a hundred miles from Notting Hill Gate Station.

“I want two postage stamps, please,” I answered.

She “chucked” the stamps at me, and throwing the twopence into a till, went on with her, no doubt, very interesting novel. Having stuck the stamps on a little parcel, I requested her to take it, as it would not go through the opening in the box outside. Annoyed at being disturbed a second time, she snatched my poor parcel and flung it into

a corner. Had I reported her at head-quarters she would have been dismissed on the spot. But I was merciful. Now this young girl was better dressed than her poor mother had ever been. She was better educated—thanks to the School Board—than ever her father was, and she was heartily ashamed of both parents, for was she not a *lady*? Ah! you poor creatures, poor silly, ignorant daughters of Eve, when will ye understand the meaning of the word *lady*? When will ye perceive that to appear as ladies ye must be polite and gentle to the humblest? when will you come to understand the simple truth, that the greatest known sign of high birth is courtesy to your inferiors? I do not speak of your superiors, because it would be useless to try and persuade ye that ye have any superiors.

I don't for one instant mean to insinuate that all post office girls are boorish. There are hundreds of civil, polite and pretty girls

in the ranks, but they are all *ladies by birth*. I remember a post office in Archer Street, Bayswater, which was, and is I presume, noted for its pretty and courteous girls.

Truth to tell, Englishwomen, except when of good birth, are terribly rude. As for the men! Remember this: the Anglo-Saxon is a savage brute at heart, and it takes at least six generations of good breeding and high-class education to make a gentleman of him. Even then the savage will frequently break forth. It takes ten generations to make a well-bred gentlewoman, simply because the education is not so high class on the female side.

Now I want you to ponder well over this, for it will show you that nature's laws cannot be altered. Nature says to Biddy Shoddy, "Yes, you have got into a good position—far better than your father ever dreamed of—you dress well, are slim and refined in appearance, and do not drop your 'h's.' You

might very well pass for a *lady*. But *I*, nature, forbid it. You still retain the rudeness of your class. You think a lady could not condescend to be civil to any one. The instant prosperity comes to you, you straightway lose your head. No, no, Biddy, you may change in station, voice, dress, and even morals, but your rude *nature* still remains, and hence you *never* can be a *lady*. You have as little of the lady in your composition as the average 'government clerk' has of the gentleman in *him*. What a satire on the name of man some of those same government clerks are! Creatures without a second idea, and mostly risen from the gutter. There are gentlemen to be found among them of course, but such gentlemen are so by *birth*. One would imagine that these low-bred men, who do all they can to ape the gentleman, would study from the living model in the desk beside them. But nature says, "No, no, Tom Shoddy, your father was a government clerk



before you, and like you *he* worked in the same office with a real gentleman for thirty years, and yet he never thought of copying his politeness and courtesy. Neither must you, Tom. You must try to ape the gentleman to your dying day without once adopting the manner which would make you one."

\* \* \* \* \*

Talking of going to town, I met old Hemming yesterday; he is out and about once more, and informed me that his daughter Susan has gone to London to a good situation, procured for her by "the maister."

"But you will miss her greatly," I said.

"Yes, sir, that be true," answered the old man with a sigh; "but the maister said it was for her good, and so I let her go. But I miss her, sir, I miss her; the cottage is so lonesome without her."

Poor old fellow, he looked very feeble and downcast as he trudged homeward.

## CHAPTER X.

### CIVILIZED SAVAGES.

LONDON seems to be getting more vulgar every year. We Anglo-Saxons are totally destitute of taste ; witness our art shows (save the mark!) and our appalling exhibitions. Yes, we manage to vulgarize everything. Education teaches us to admire beautiful objects and sweet music, but the Italian and Frenchman can admire such things without being educated. The love of the beautiful is born in them. Both are superior to us as *civilized* men. We are the only European nation, save perhaps the Russians, who still have a large share of the savage in us, though in our madness we think ourselves the cream of the civilized world. Vain boast ! Take a sample of the Anglo-Saxon who has not been educated

up to the love of the beautiful. To judge of a country you must not study its upper or educated classes, you must study its "people." We will accordingly take a sample of our race from among the "people" of its mighty capital—mighty *London*—the Mecca of the greatest madmen in the world. Now let us pick one out at random ; he will do as a sample of the whole, and will exhibit the Anglo-Saxon character in its native purity, unspoiled by education. Here he is—Henry Smith, "'Arry," as he is affectionately called by all who have the pleasure of his acquaintance. Have a good look at 'Arry ; observe his fishy eyes, trap-door mouth and monster teeth, horribly unclean (what there are of them). Note his large ill-shaped head, low forehead, shovel feet and lobster hands. What are this man's amusements ? His parents are well-to-do greengrocers. He seldom helps them, except on Saturday nights. How does he spend his time ? Smoking and swilling beer all day,

save when he is engaged in dogging some unprotected girl through the streets with a view to "picking her up" and debauching her. Every night sees him in some music hall, where that awful voice of his swells the chorus of some such ditty as :

"It's noice to be a masher ;  
Oi ham the laaidy's dasher ;  
The gurls they croy  
When Oi pass boy,  
There goes the laaidy's masher."

(I have endeavoured to spell the words as pronounced by 'Arry and his mates.) Has he any idea of literature, science, or art? Ask him. As for the typical young girl in 'Arry's station, I will not shock you by giving her portrait. She is, like the Turk, "unspeakable."

I judge of the genius and character of a people by their public statues. What do the London statues speak to me of? War, war, war! It is the Anglo-Saxon's nature to fight, conquer and oppress whenever he

gets the chance. So we bravely go into the land of the black man with a sword in one hand and a Bible in the other, while "our Mr. Jenkins" follows in our wake with samples of rum and whisky. All the black men we don't succeed in killing, we convert to Christianity, which seems to bring with it an absorbing desire for ardent spirits. Have you ever looked over a volume of the *Times*? Any person doing so will find from its truthful columns that England's policy is one of "Aggression and Repression." Look over any number of volumes, and the result will be the same.

The *Daily Telegraph* truly called the Anglo-Saxon in a "state of nature" a "cruel savage;" but though cruel and savage, he is not crafty and cowardly until he becomes civilized, or semi-civilized. (I have come to the conclusion that you cannot wholly civilize the Anglo-Saxon.)

Little Mrs. Wilson is stopping in the same

hotel with me—*not* with me in the same hotel, please to understand. (Delightful language, the English.) She arrived about three days after me. (Positively divine language, the English.) Strange coincidence that we both should fix on the same hotel! She came into my sitting-room to-day with grave news. Lady de Jones, the wife of Sir Thomas de Jones, the eminent physician, has actually given birth to *twins*! If a thunderbolt had fallen through the de Jones' roof it could not have caused more consternation. Twins are *awfully* vulgar, it appears. I never knew this before. But little Mrs. Wilson knows all about these things. The announcement of the birth will not appear in any of the papers, and Sir Thomas and Lady de Jones are immediately going abroad. It appears that twins have been out of fashion for close on twenty years, and are not likely to become the correct thing again until some duchess, at

least, introduces them once more.. Poor little unfortunate de Joneses, Junior, how will ye ever meet your mother's reproachful gaze? Better you had been still-born. Had you been boys it would not have been quite so bad, though bad enough ; but you are both girls, and Mrs. Wilson says girl twins are beyond redemption. Mrs. Wilson says it is feared that Sir Thomas will lose a lot of his patients through the unfortunate affair. Let us hope not. One misfortune at a time is quite sufficient. So, my dear mad brother or sister, when the season is over and Sir T. and his good lady return home again from the south of France, do not desert your eminent physician. The twins were not *his* fault.

Little Mrs. Wilson complains of having no male friend to escort her to the theatre, and declares that life is becoming a burthen to her, as she cannot attend any place of amusement. Fancy a woman getting tired

of life because she cannot attend a theatre—a woman of £5,000 a year! A good-natured little creature though—actually brought me a bouquet of crimson roses this morning. I have promised to take her to the opera to-night.





## CHAPTER XI.

### AT THE OPERA.

THE little widow and myself are seated in the third row of the stalls. The opera is "Traviata," and the house is accordingly crowded. Her Grace of Stanton is seated in her box, looking very pretty in pink and pearls.

"Do you like the duchess in pink?" asks my companion. "I don't. Americans never know how to dress."

"Indeed; how is that?"

"Oh, I don't know," answers the little widow, opening an enormous fan formed of crimson ostrich feathers. "I don't know why, but they don't. The duchess does not care for music."

"No?" I say rather surprised. "Then

why does she give so many musical At Homes during the season?"

"Oh, just because it is the thing," snaps the little widow. "All duchesses go in for private concerts, and besides, our duchess is so fond of Signor Tontine's singing," and the widow gives a dimply smile.

"Well, he has got a superb voice, as tenors go now-a-days," I say.

"Yes, he's got a lovely voice, and *lovelier* eyes," says Mrs. Wilson, and then adds after a slight pause, "I think the duchess admires the signor more as a friend than as a mere singer," and the dimples play all over her face.

"Oh, she admires him as a man more than as a tenor, you mean to say?"

"Yes, he is very handsome."

"And the duke—what does he think about the matter?"

"The duke! oh, who cares *what* he thinks?" exclaims the little widow, fan-

ning herself furiously. "He is *just as bad.*"

"As the duchess or the tenor?"

"Hush!" she says. "I want to listen to the music."

And the opera begins. Signor Tontine is in splendid voice and receives tumultuous applause. A handsome man is the signor—no brains, though, I fear.

Have you read that book lately published, which treats of opera singers? If you have not, pray do so at once; it will give you some idea of what operatic managers have to put up with in this mad world. The whims, ignorant presumption, and downright impertinence of our operatic stars, as set forth in that book, are simply astounding. The writer of the book says, very justly, that the lower the origin of the singers, the more impertinent and presuming they are. 'Twas ever thus. Mario appears to have been the only thing approaching a gentleman

—he was an Italian count—on the operatic stage. As for the signoras, one *prima donna* seemed to be just a little bit more ignorant and presuming than the other. All mad, of course, but not half as mad as the public who applauded them. Was it not Frederick the Great who, on a *prima donna* getting sulky and refusing to appear, sent a cohort of guards to take her out of her bed and make her dress and appear? Great man, Frederick—mad as Daddy-long-legs.

During the *entr'acte* I stand up and survey the house through my glasses.

In one of the top boxes I catch sight of Towers's moustache. He is talking to some one concealed from view behind the silk curtain. Ah! now I see a bare arm encircled by a diamond bracelet. Wonder who she is? Fancy bringing a lady to the top tier! He must know that ladies go to the opera to be seen. Stay, though; this

lady evidently prefers not being seen, for she keeps close behind the curtain. Ah! she has risen and gone to the back of the box, where in the shade she can survey part of the house. She thinks no one can see her, but not so—I can spot her through my glasses. So this is the “good situation,” my pretty Susan? What good wages you must receive to be able to sport those diamonds. Why, the old gardener would scarcely know his daughter!

Resuming my seat I catch sight of Paul Joyce, who is sitting about two stalls to the left. Paul is one of my oldest friends—a consummate madman. He is dark, melancholy-eyed, and I should say about thirty-six years old; has a small estate in Wales and a large one in Ireland; from the latter he has received no rent for the past three years. I nod to him and he nods to me, and so the second act commences.

“Do you see that funny-looking old man

seated behind the duchess?" observes the little widow.

I look towards the box, and see a hatchet-faced and ferrety-eyed old man in a colossal shirt front, and the baldest head I ever saw.

"Who is he?" I ask.

"Few people know, but *I* do," says Mrs. Wilson, becoming very dimply. "That old man is her uncle. She never invites him to her house, either here or in the country, because he is too awfully vulgar. But as he is very rich, and a bachelor, she does not like the idea of him leaving his wealth to charitable institutions."

"And so——"

"And so, don't you see, she invites him to her opera box, when she has no one else there. It satisfies him." And the little widow gives a merry little laugh.

Wonderful woman the little widow; knows every one's affairs. What a wife she would make for a political man with aspirations!

If she wouldn't succeed in making her husband Premier, it would be a puzzle to all concerned. Can't make out how it is that she is not married before this. Her first is now dead close on two years. Yes, she will be married before another twelve months. A three-years' widow with five thousand per annum is a moral impossibility. Very pretty does the little woman look to-night, and many are the admiring glances bestowed upon her. Happy thought: introduce Paul Joyce, though I fear the die is cast as far as poor Paul is concerned. Wonder has he ever seen *her* since? This little widow would soon make him forget his sorrow—would soon wake him up from his dreams. Paul is a devil to dream.

\* \* \* \* \*

I never cared for this opera, and will be glad when it is over. It is not the music, but the questionable plot which makes it so popular. Oh! for one act of the glorious

“Don ”—though by the way *that* plot is not quite Sunday-schoolly.

“Do you like German operas?” I say to the widow.

“Why do you ask me? Do you?”

“Yes, very much.”

“So do I,” says the little widow, dimpling.

A charming little creature !





## CHAPTER XII.

### THAT'S THE WAY THE MONEY GOES.

Do you still doubt my words as to the barbarian taste of the English people? Just read this clipping from the *Echo* newspaper. It is headed "A Piccadilly Night scene." So you will perceive that the occurrence has taken place in the midst of the most fashionable portion of this great metropolis of the world. I only give an extract from the report.

This was the constable's story :—" At twenty minutes after midnight a large crowd of young men and women assembled near the Criterion, in Piccadilly, and shouted and holloaed at the top of their voices. The prisoner was among them, and when advised to go away remarked, 'It's all —— rot ; I am a

solicitor and shall stop here as long as I like.' On again being told that he must go away, he struck the constable with his stick and trod upon his toe, causing him great pain. He was arrested by another constable. There had been a football match between Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and a number of people who had been to see it came out of the Criterion and met another crowd coming from a boxing competition at Her Majesty's Theatre. The disturbance was so great that the inspector at the station had to turn out the constables who were off duty in order to quell it."

There is a great deal more of the same nature in the report, but I have given sufficient for my purpose. Remember this is only *one* sample of a series. Such brawls occur almost every other night in the neighbourhood of Piccadilly. Now just think of the primary cause of this row. Our rival universities are having that refined and intel-

lectual amusement—a football match. Our chief operatic house is filled with a crowd witnessing a boxing contest. The football crowd and the boxing crowd meet outside a restaurant and proceed to break each other's skulls. This, oh, beloved madmen, is ENGLAND!

Do you remember when slumming was all the rage among our madwomen? All the East end lanes and alleys were visited by our dainty leaders of fashion. Ah! which end of London is the most brutal and wicked? Which end of London most needs the influence of good women? That reminds me. Have you failed to notice the almost constant appeals for help—monetary help—on behalf of the East end which appear in the papers? If so, do not fail again, for thereby hangs a tale. Do you know the fearful amount of poverty and starvation, not only in the East end of London, but in the West end too, ay, and

all over England. What becomes of all the money we pay in taxes? How is it that some of it does not go to feed these starving inhabitants of "the wealthiest, noblest and most civilized country in the world?" I will tell you, dear mad friend. Our money is squandered, recklessly and criminally squandered, by our Government. This England could be properly managed for half the money we pay its present mismanagers. There is not a single public department which is not disgracefully mismanaged, while we pay double and treble for its mismanagement. Just think over some of the items we pay—we who cannot afford to help our starving fellow-creatures. We give £400 a year to the Pursebearer; we know not what the man is or what his duties are. We give to our Clerk of Presentations (another mystery) £1,000 a year. Then we have a gentleman whose sole duty is "to carry the Great Seal home," whatever that may mean; we

give him £335 pounds per year. But hear Mr. Jennings from his place in the House of Commons: "When things are done on this lavish scale we need not be surprised to find the judges requiring 22 clerks, costing over £8,000 per annum. The salaries of masters ranging from £1,500 to over £2,000—these being among the pleasantest things which patronage has to bestow on the undeserving. Sir F. Pollock, a senior master, said before a committee on the subject, that there were no duties which a senior clerk could not perform just as well as a master: 85 clerks attached to this office receive from £250 to £700 a year. . . . Before the committee of 1886, it was stated that one clerk was employed in entering summonses in a book, receiving £400 a year for work that could be done by the merest copyist. A little further down the list are entered five clerks as 'redundant' since 1871. These receive from £300 to £500 a year, but not

one of them has passed the threshold of his office for the last seven years (laughter). Why should the country be called upon to pay men £400 and £500 a year to walk about the streets doing nothing while there are thousands of people who are obliged to walk about the streets because they have nothing to do? . . . . The effect of the present system is to put a premium on incompetence. . . . . The clerks in one department are supposed to work from eleven o'clock to five, but Mr. Vizzard, in his evidence before the Royal Commission, said that some of them really went away at four instead of five—the *ennui* of the place was so great that they could not stand it (laughter). Pressed by the Commissioners he added, 'If we have any private work to do we are not always there at eleven o'clock.' That was to say that they did their private work first, and if they had any scrap of time left they gave it to their public duties (laugh-

ter). . . . . The clerks in the Taxing Department are paid £600 a year, work six hours a day, and have six weeks' holiday every summer. . . . . In the Chancery division there are 12 clerks at nearly £1,200 per annum each, 24 clerks at £600 per annum each, and a host of other officials from registrars with £2,000 a year to clerks at £300. . . . . The Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division is another haven of peace and plenty (laughter). The Senior Registrar of the Probate Registry pockets £1,600 a year, besides a compound allowance of £1,863 8s. 6d., with some smaller sum, making a grand total of £3,472 annually. . . . . I cannot see why these shameful amounts should be paid to officials whose duties are notoriously light and easy. The gentleman next below the one I have just mentioned is the registrar of Admiralty Registers, who pockets £2,134 for services of the very slightest kind. The man who looks



after the ushers in the Courts of Justice draws £600 per annum, while the distinguished person who gives out the pens and ink, and who is called Superintendent of Stationery, receives £300 per annum. All the charges in the estimates appear to be based on the same prodigal scale."

In the foregoing speech—or rather extracts from it—I have been careful to bracket the "laughter," just to let you see how funny this scandalous state of affairs seemed to be to the inmates of our great Madhouse. Just ponder over these amounts, and then remember that they only represent a small tithe of the money squandered by our Government, while we are taxed up to our eyes, while our war-ships are without guns, our infantry without swords, our cavalry without horses and our poor without food. Notwithstanding all this, many of us think ourselves SANE !



## CHAPTER XIII.

### CONCERNING FRITZ.

I NOTICE that the rather sullen, impudent and surly-looking young man who is Emperor of Germany, is nothing if not national. His latest decree is that all German actors and actresses should banish all French words, or even words based on the French, from their professional vocabulary. Thus, *scène*, *ballet*, *répertoire*, and such words, have received notice to quit. I wish the young Emperor would in his intense nationalism prohibit his subjects from leaving their country. But I fear his Imperial Majesty is not quite so mad as that, though the Germans are all very mad indeed. I have come to the conclusion that it is the fact of their being Germans which makes them so mad. Who would be a German

if he could possibly help it? Have you ever noticed how awfully offended people are at being mistaken for Germans? I know Germans myself who in the most transparent German accent unblushingly declare that they are English bred and born. Why, even those pasty-faced waiters in our public restaurants tell you they are "Sweeze," by which they mean to say that they are Swiss, though their square German jaws and accent betrays them at once. A curious fact about this same accent: Certain Irish brogues are, to English ears, undistinguishable from the German accent, and thereby hangs a tale. I once knew a little fellow from South Dublin who had to the full that peculiarly rough South Dublin bogue. He had spent some time in London, and always spoke of the Londoners with the greatest contempt. I once asked him why he disliked London and its people so much. "I'll tell you the reason, sur," he answered. "They always took me for a damned German!" Of

late one of our journalists spoke of the Queen of Spain as a German, whereupon the Spanish Ambassador actually called upon him to deny the assertion. We English are the most unpopular people on the face of the earth. We are objects of dislike and contempt from north to south, and from east unto the west. But if we are *disliked* by foreigners, the Germans are absolutely *hated*. Witness them here in England: Fritz comes over here, works for starvation wages, and then sends for all his family, including his sisters, his cousins, and his aunts. All offer their services for starvation wages, thus ousting their English rivals. Worse still—their workmanship is far inferior to that of English hands, but of course passes for *English work* in the market at home and abroad, and thus gives rise to the opinion that “English work is deteriorating.” In fact, through these Germans our country is completely losing her trade in manufactured articles. How intensely amusing is that man

Bismarck's mad remark, "We Germans fear nothing but God." As far as I can gather, the Germans fear nothing so much as living in their own country, for they quit it as fast as they possibly can. I am not a lover of armed strife, but I am fully convinced that the sooner Germany goes to war with some state, the better it will be for England—that is, *if* all the Germans now among us are compelled to return to the Fatherland and fight.

Now let us look calmly, and like dispassionate madmen, at the root of all this German pauperism—pauperism which drives these square-faced, snub-nosed, hard-working creatures away from their own country to the German's paradise—London. We see a magnificent country, famous for its literature, science and art, ruled by a young soldier, sprung from a race of mighty warriors, and with an army said to be the largest and best drilled in Europe. We perceive that every man born in the land has *per force* to become

a soldier, as if the good God of Heaven sent him into the world for the express purpose of sending some other soldier out of it. We perceive that the young emperor's chief amusement is the constant reviewing those men who are *per force* soldiers. What a nice box of toys the young man has got to be sure! And what a nice price the nation pays for his amusement! God knows how many thousands of pounds are squandered yearly in parades for our young friend's amusement.

This great country is, as far as I can see, from one end to the other, a mere nursery for soldiers. In fact, Germany is one huge barracks. All who can get out of its gates flee for their lives to England and America. "Where is the German Fatherland?" is a line in one of their songs. The question is easily answered—the German Fatherland is any place but at home. So hail the first shot of a new Franco-German war, and let us be rid of our square-faced friends!

Don't you forget, my dear brothers, that France is the greatest country in the world. We English are rough and ready boors compared to the French. What *do* we know about art, music, or any other intellectual refinement, after all? You can take the French at anything and everything—art, literature, science, arms—and they remain supreme. And in the matter of courtesy, refinement and politeness, how much can they not teach us? People will tell you that French politeness is only on the surface. Well, what of that? We don't want men's politeness hidden from view—we want to see it, to feel it. Politeness on the surface is just where it should be. How often do we hear it said of one of our own countrymen, “Yes, he appears rather brusque and rude, but he is a good fellow when you come to know him.” When we come to know him! As if we care to cultivate an intimate acquaintance with a man who is brusque and rude! No, give me the Frenchman with his

politeness on the surface. Again I ask, what *do* we know of art—or, to put it more properly, the fine arts? That we Anglo-Saxons are the vulgarest people on the face of God's beautiful earth, I think I have intimated before. As a *people*, our sense of beauty is *nil*. If we try to worship the beautiful in art, we become grotesque and let our hair grow long, starve ourselves to look haggard, and sport sunflowers—which never should be cut from their stalks—and wild poppies. The *sense* of beauty is not in us. What architects we are! John Ruskin has been for fifty long years trying to teach us how to build a decent-looking house, and up to this not one of us has followed his teaching. Not because we don't want to do so, but because we *cannot*—Ruskin's sense of beauty is beyond us. What a hideous city London is, take it for all in all!—And New York! For a full sense of our Anglo-Saxon taste, both here and in America, you should visit both London and New York,

and *then* Paris. All these remarks are bred of the information given me by the little widow, to the effect that at the Duchess of Stanton's musical afternoon, which takes place to-morrow, a great German fiddler and a greater French baritone will be on view. The duchess gets hold of some capital lions.





## CHAPTER XIV.

### A MUSICAL AFTERNOON.

THE Duchess of Stanton's musical At Home is in full swing, and some fellow with a very bald head is thumping away at the piano. Present: the duchess herself, looking very pretty in a chaste white morning costume; little Mrs. Wilson, pert and dimply, gossiping with a very broad bishop with immense calves—she occasionally darts a glance out of those wicked eyes in my direction (wants me to notice the calves, I expect: wonderful sense of humour in the little widow);—two members of Parliament talking matters of state in a corner—one all whiskers and watch-chain, and the other all feet and nose: both very mad; curly-headed, dapper young artist—painted the duchess for last year's

Academy show—spooning Miss Minton, the new society actress; four or five titled nonentities looking very much pleased with themselves; Carton, the Zolaite novelist, taking mental notes, as he fingers his fiery moustache; a bevy of the prettiest girls of the season, quietly criticizing each other; the bishop's daughter with a very parrotty nose—she is nearly forty, Mrs. Wilson says—looking languidly towards Captain Spray of the Blues. No, I don't think the captain will rise. Presently I catch sight of Paul Joyce seated near the piano. Must have a chat with Paul by-and-by. Others present, "too numerous to mention." Enter Signor Tontine. Ah! he is not so young as he looks when on the stage. His face has that haggard appearance common to all theatrical people who have been for any length of time on the boards. His eyes are large and dark, but with a certain sly expression lurking in the corner. Her grace flushes just a tiny bit. Fancy a thing

like that making a duchess flush ever so little! But see the bouquet of beautiful English girls present—they don't deign to bestow even a cursory glance at the famous tenor. No, they are all *ladies*, bless them, with all their faults, and do not go in for spooning greasy Italian singers. No, they appear perfectly unconscious of the great signor's presence, as one and all they sit gazing in silent rapture on the magnificent form of Frank Felton, the champion amateur boxer. But hush! the signor sings.

Ah! in this small room I can detect flaws in the voice, not noticeable in the theatre. Yes, his voice is *going*. Hurry up, signor! Make hay while the sun shines, for soon you will go unloved by even American duchesses. After the signor has finished "La Donna e Mobile," the great German fiddler—well, violinist—enters: a short, fat, heavy grey-moustached man, with shining steel-coloured hair brushed back from the forehead; the

hair on the back part of his head needs the scissors badly. He carries his fiddle in a neat case. He loses no time in uncarting it and starting with his great solo. Yes, this German *can* play the fiddle—well, if you wish it, violin. Enter M. Privot, a well-known society baritone; a tall handsome man, quiet and surprisingly unassuming for an amateur singer.

Every one seems glad to see him, and presently the duchess graciously asks him if he will favour us with a song. He will be only too delighted, if any one will condescend to accompany him. “It is a new song,” he adds, unfolding the roll of music. No one apparently is bold enough to venture, for the first time, on the treacherous sea of a new baritone song accompaniment, and “before such a lot of people too.” Suddenly the German fiddler rises, and intimates that he will be happy to accompany Monsieur Privot. What a scene follows! Monsieur Privot turns

white, and his eyes flash like an angry cat's.

"No, I will go," he exclaims glaring at the poor duchess; "I cannot stop the longer. You should not have invited me where this man comes," and he points his long delicate finger towards the fiddler. "You should *not*, Madame la Duchesse! It is insult!" And he rushes from the room leaving us all speechless with astonishment.

No, not all of us, the fiddler seems to take it all as a matter of course. He smiles blandly, and remarks:

"It is Sedan dat is the cause of all *that*, ladies and gentlemen."

"How shockingly rude!" remarks the bishop, who wants to stretch his legs, but is afraid to.

"I am very much surprised at Monsieur Privot, and shall not *insult* him for the future by asking him to honour my house with his company," observes her grace with

well-acted dignity. "I regret, Professor Pflantz, that you should have received any discourtesy from any guest in my house," she adds, "and beg to apologize for having invited Monsieur Privot here."

"Oh, do not speak of it," says the German smiling. "I do not at all mind vot Frenchmen say."

It was certainly very bad form on the part of the baritone, but think of the patriotism! Remember this: the Celt never ceases to be a patriot. You will perhaps say that the French are not Celts, but you will be wrong if you do. The French are every bit as much Celts as the Irish or Scotch. Now, a German who leaves his own Fatherland for America or England, is in five years a complete Yankee, or Englishman, as the case may be. Germany he never wants to see again, nor does he take the slightest interest in her politics, commerce, literature, science or art. Not so the

Frenchman, or the Irishman, or the Scotchman. Whatever land they by force of circumstances are driven to always remains the land of the stranger to them. Let them rise to wealth and power, or sink to poverty and obscurity, their native land is always first in their hearts. All honour to Monsieur Privot, then, and with all his bad form let us echo his sentiments—*vive la France!*

Yes, one of the maddest blunders of this mad England was her falling out with France and truckling to Germany.



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE WIDOW AND I GO TO CHURCH.

THAT exceedingly stupid man the Duke of Stanton has left England. Left his beautiful castle in the country, his gorgeous mansion in town, left his pleasant clubs, his life of ease, his pretty young wife—and all for what? Why, to go shoot bears—when he can find them—in the Rocky Mountains. And this eminent idiot would probably take an action against me if I called him insane in print!

Yesterday being Sunday, little Mrs. Wilson asked me to escort her to Beaufort Street Church. She apologized for troubling me, but explained that it was not fashionable for ladies to be seen alone in Beaufort Street Church since the late curate ran away with Miss Cuttle, an orphan heiress, who always



attended the church alone. It appears that the curate was hampered with a wife and five children, but they did not handicap him in the least in his flight with Miss Cuttle. He did not allow them to do so.

The sermon was delivered by the rector, who has not yet lost the Oxford drawl. He sawed the air very much, but then he had such beautiful Vandyck hands. He spoke for nearly twenty minutes on the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and then hastened away after a hurried benediction to be in time for luncheon off solid gold plate, with his grace the Duke of Coalhurst.

Little Mrs. Wilson says he is a perfect duck of a clergyman, and *so* good to the poor. It appears he actually advertises in the daily papers for assistance on behalf of the poor of the parish, every Christmas. With the money thus received he purchases several half-pounds of one-and-sixpenny tea, one of which

he bestows upon each poor person who has not missed church *once* in the past twelve months. A good, kind, thoughtful, Christian gentleman. How the poor of this parish must bless him. His wife, the dear soul, has also a fund started, from which she is enabled to bestow a two-pound bar of soap, wrapped up in a temperance tract, to all who are fortunate enough to win the half-pound of tea.

By-the-way, this Beaufort Street Church is rather fashionable, and accordingly the Duchess of Stanton has hired a very prominent pew therein. She prayed yesterday in company with Mrs. Coombes, the newest society beauty. Mrs. Wilson informs me that she believes that there really is a husband to Mrs. Coombes somewhere or other, though she has never met any one who has ever seen him. For the rest, Mrs. Coombes is very beautiful, dresses well, has a pretty wit, makes a capital two-shilling cabinet *carte-de-*

*visite*, and is a tremendous draw. She appears to be at present in the service of her Grace of Stanton, who thereby is sure of all the best men in town at her entertainments. A great woman at bazaars is Mrs. Coombes: all the charity-organization mongers east and west fight tooth and nail for her services. You should behold her stall at one of their bazaars, with "MRS. COOMBES, UNIVERSAL PROVIDER," printed in gold letters on pink silk over the top. Such a stall of choice and tempting articles! Universal provider she is indeed, for her stall is filled with everything pretty and useful, from a sealskin cigar-case to the newest thing in walking-sticks. Oh! does she *not* look lovely as she sits behind her wares in the soft dim light of a large pink lamp! I shall have more to say about the beautiful Coombes presently.

Towers also patronized Beaufort Street yesterday, it was only when he stood up that I saw him; when seated his head did not

reach top the to of the pew. Wonder where Susan was doing her devotions?

The Tatte-Snarlow gang were also in evidence; things are growing desperate with the girls—even the youngest is beginning to look *fade*. They kept their eyes on little Towers—whenever he stood up and gave them a chance. Hope one of them will capture him. If so, old Hemming and his daughter will be amply revenged.

On our way homeward, Mrs. Wilson said she did not know what to think of Stanton going away, and “leaving such a *giddy* wife all alone in London.”

“Oh! I think the duchess will manage to take care of herself,” I said. “Yankee women are not such foolish creatures as their English sisters.”

“Do you think not?” murmured the little woman. “Then I suppose *I* am one of those foolish Englishwomen?”

“I hope not,” I answered.

“You are very kind,” she snapped with a jerk of her little head.

“Now pray don’t get angry with me, Mrs. Wilson,” I said. “If you really wish to know my opinion, I think you the most sensible woman I have ever met.”

I knew this would bring back the dimples, which it did; the little widow was all smiles and dimples for the rest of the journey. Oh! if I only told her how awfully mad she was!

Have promised to go to a confounded dinner to be followed by a ball to-morrow night. How I wish the season was well over, and I at liberty to return to the country. Think of the madness of leaving our beautiful country houses, whilst the country is looking its loveliest, and rushing up to this broiling, overcrowded London for the purpose of boring each other to death at balls, receptions and dinners in stifling rooms! Madness—is it not worse than madness? Think of the gorgeous beauty of

the woods and dales, the glorious summer breeze, laden with the scent of millions of flowers; think of the beauty—but I forget, we have no sense of beauty in England.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### PAUL JOYCE EXPLAINS HIS MISSION.

PAUL JOYCE dined with me yesterday. His madness has taken a new turn. He was labouring under the delusion that he has a mission—a very mad mission indeed. He called it “Intellectual Monarchy.” His idea is that our greatest men should constitute a body from which they would elect by vote one of their number as king, and that king should be absolute monarch over us all until he reached the age of seventy, when he should retire, and another king be elected in his place.

“It *will* be,” exclaimed Paul, rising from his seat and pacing up and down the room. “It *shall* be, Phil ; but not during our time. The next century—about the middle of it—

will see my dream fulfilled, provided I am spared for a few years, so as to be able to travel from country to country and teach the rising generation how to work the thing. I mean to travel not only over England, but even through France, Germany and Russia. I will sow the seed which will spring up and blossom in the next century."

"Why not in this century?" I asked.

"Listen," he answered standing still before me.

"This is the fag end of the nineteenth century. All its great work is done. It is past bearing, and in fact is on its death-bed. All its great people have been, and are gone. No more great men will come until the new century dawns. And what mighty men has this dying nineteenth century not borne in her time," and Paul began his walk again. "Ah! Phil, old boy, just think of the sixties; think of the race of giants who were on earth *then*. If they had only thought of banding



together and proclaiming themselves rulers of the earth."

"Who?"

"Who? Thackeray, Dickens, Victor Hugo, Carlyle, Dumas, Tyndall, Browning, Tennyson, Longfellow, Huxley, Ruskin—these are a few of the mighty race who lived in the sixties. Some are among us still, Phil, but the harvest is past and the summer has gone with them, and their work is done. What a band of immortal kings!" he cried in ecstasy, "what a royal brotherhood."

"But have we not great men still—other than those you have named?" I asked.

"Pigmies, Phil, pigmies," he answered, resuming his seat. "Dregs of the golden bumper. I tell you there will be no more great men this side of nineteen hundred. It is the law of nature."

"Well, how are you going to work? What is your programme?"

"I'll tell you; the idea has been working

in my mind for the past three years. Now ask yourself, Phil, has there ever been a king or emperor who in mind—in intellect—could compare with any of the band of immortals I have just mentioned? No. In olden times, ere people learned better manners, they were always attacking or being attacked. They did not live in a period of Thought, they lived in a period of Action. They could not read, they could not write, but each man born of woman was taught to fight. His life, his home, his liberty depended on his skill with the bow and arrow. The bravest and most skilful shot was elected leader of his brothers when setting forth to attack, or when defending their country from hostile neighbours. As times grew milder, the sons of these rough-and-ready leaders were created kings, and as such were always ready in times of war to lead their armies in person. Those times are gone by now. We now pay hired soldiers, whom we create generals and

the like, to lead our armies (also hired) forth to battle. Kings don't expose themselves now. Such being the case, what do we want with them? Their occupation is gone."

"Oh! you're a republican," I exclaimed.

"Nothing of the sort," he answered, rather sharply. "I am anything but a republican. I am for a monarchy, but my monarch must be a man of intellect. In fact I want our greatest man to be king. You admit, I presume, that Ben Jonson was a greater man than that tipsy mountebank, James the First?"

"Yes."

"And you will admit that Shakespeare and Bacon were greater people than that she-dragon Elizabeth?"

"Yes."

"I only cite those at random; but if I wished I could go through any reign, both here and in other countries, and prove that in each reign the real kings were private

individuals." Here he rose excitedly and cried, "Heavens! Phil, just think of Shakespeare having to walk backwards from the presence of a drunken clown like James the First! Is it not enough to make your blood boil?"

"Well, you see, Paul, of course Shakespeare was a demi-god in comparison to the Scot, but at the same time he was only a subject while the other was King of England."

"Ah, good God, man! that's the whole matter," and Paul's great mad eyes flashed fire. "Isn't that what I am endeavouring to stop?"

"Stop—how?"

"By lecturing. Does not your own sense tell you that the people of a country should be led by their greatest men? Doesn't your own sense tell you that there must be something radically wrong with a country which allows its great Shakespeare to go untitled,

while it bows to the yoke of a tipsy Scotch buffoon?"

"Yes, yes, my dear boy, but what is the use of talking about such matters? As I told you, we are all mad, and we will never do anything as it should be done in this world."

"Yes, we will, Phil, yes, we will, or at least those who come after us will. As sure as my name is Paul Joyce, the twentieth century will see my dream of Intellectual Monarchy fulfilled."

"Never," I said laughing, "it's all nonsense."

"I say it *will*," exclaimed Paul.

"Never," I persisted.

"It shall by ——" Uncle Toby's immortal oath may have been a very big one, but I firmly believe that Phil's was bigger.

The dear old madman has promised to come and stay with me for a while at Brownlow. What a pity he did not marry that girl he was so much in love with long years

ago. Disappointed lovers are as prone to mischief as childless wives. I greatly fear that Paul's mischief will turn out rather serious for him, if he goes lecturing in Russia.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### MRS. COOMBES.

AT all bazaars, as I have previously intimated, Mrs. Coombes' stall is the centre of attraction, principally of course on account of Mrs. Coombes herself, but also for the sake of the really useful and ornamental articles she offers for sale. I was saying the other day to Mrs. Wilson that Mrs. Coombes *must* have a regular income of some fairish amount or she never could purchase such charming and expensive articles to re-sell for charity. At this the little widow laughed very heartily indeed, and then lamented my ignorance.

“Why, don't you know how Mrs. Coombes obtains all the goods for her bazaar stalls?” she asked.

“No; I understood she purchased them.”

“ Oh, dear no,” said the widow. “ Mrs. Coombes is nothing out of pocket by her charity, I can assure you. Catch her ! ”

“ Well then, how is it done ? ” I asked.

“ By barefaced *cheek* ! ” exclaimed the widow. “ Excuse me using a vulgar expression, but it is the only one applicable. *Cheek* is Mrs. Coombes’ magic power of converting other people’s property into her own.”

“ How do you mean ? ”

“ Why, she calls upon all her friends and acquaintances, no matter how slight the acquaintance, and anything nice and portable she sees in their rooms she insists on being presented with for charitable purposes.”

“ The deuce she does ! ”

“ Yes, she is advertised, along with the Duchess of Stanton and others, to assist at the forthcoming Old English Fair in aid of the funds of the Royal Home for Idiots. Probably you will receive a visit from her,” and the little widow smiled a wicked smile.



Sure enough, yesterday morning, while at my rather late breakfast, Mrs. Coombes arrived unannounced.

“Now don’t attempt to rise,” she exclaimed playfully. “Proceed with your breakfast. I had no idea you were such a late mortal; and you men are always deriding us poor women on our late hours.”

“Well, the fact is, Mrs. Coombes——”

“Now pray don’t apologize,” she interrupted. “How can you be expected to appear early during a busy season? I saw you at Mrs. Belmont’s last night.”

“Yes, I was there, but came away rather early.”

“I don’t blame you at all, Mr. Brownlow, it was ghastly. The Belmonts never knew how to entertain.”

“No?”

“No; why old Mr. Belmont (I mean the present one’s father) was only a captain in the navy—a mere navy captain.”

“Dear me, you astonish me, Mrs. Coombes.”

“I’m *sure* I do,” she replied, gazing round the room rapidly. “By the way, what are you going to present me with for my stall at the bazaar next week. I have called on you specially, knowing you are a generous man.” And the beautiful eyes beamed upon me.

“Well, really, Mrs. Coombes, were I at Brownlow I could readily find something suitable for a bazaar stall, but here I——”

“Now, now, I won’t take any excuses,” she exclaimed, rising and laughingly running from corner to corner of the room. At length she discovered my beautiful Malacca cane mounted in gold—it had only returned from being mounted last week.

“Oh, this *beautiful* cane is the very thing!” she cried in rapture. “You dear man, to have such a nice offering for me. I will hang it up right in the centre of my stall.”

“But, Mrs. Coombes——”

“Now, not a word—I insist on having this cane. *Au revoir*; will see you at Lady Bashfield’s to-night, I expect,” and she ran off ere I could say another word.

Shortly afterwards Mrs. Wilson came in.

“What on earth made you so *foolish* as to give that cane to Mrs. Coombes?” she cried.

“Well, if the truth must be told, Mrs. Wilson, I did *not* give the cane to Mrs. Coombes. She took it.”

“Yes, but why did you let her take it?” And little Mrs. Wilson appeared actually to be angry. But why—what did it matter to her?

“I could not prevent her taking it,” I answered. “She didn’t give me time. She was gone with it ere I could say Jack Robinson. But how did you know anything about it? Did she call at your rooms?”

“Oh, yes,” said the widow.

“And what did you give her?”

“A bit of my mind,” and the dimples returned again. “Mrs. Coombes won’t beg anything for charity from *me* in a hurry. What a madwoman she must be to think people cannot see through it all.”

The little widow was not aware of the great truth she uttered just then. Mrs. Coombes is very mad indeed. She thinks she is one of the leaders of fashion and one of the queens of society. Alas! it is not so. She is made use of by people like the Duchess of Stanton, who set her as a decoy duck to make the men flock to their receptions. She is used by charitymongers to wheedle the money out of men’s pockets at bazaars—said method of gaining cash being rather “too, too much” for thoroughbred women. Yes, Mrs. Coombes has her uses, but she is not treated as an equal, though she is in blissful ignorance of the fact. Next season she will have become forgotten, will have

been divorced from her now invisible husband, and we will hear no more of her until she appears on the stage as "Juliet" in a *matinée*. Poor little society beauty!



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### AT THE THEATRE.

WE went to the theatre last night — the widow and I—to see the “ highly successful comic opera entitled ‘Minetta.’” Shades of Jacques Offenbach and Hortense Schneider, what has comic opera come to? When one thinks of “La Grande Duchesse,” even as performed in English—when one thinks of its mad, merry fun, its sparkling music and its clever interpreters, one is forced to wonder how the public put up with the wretched vulgar productions, miscalled *comic* operas, now offered them. I don’t for one moment suppose that any comic opera, or rather opera-bouffe, will ever be written to approach the “Grand Duchess,” but still something within, say, a hundred miles of it ought

to have appeared ere this. Is the thing dead? Has the light of comic opera gone out in France—it never *has* been in England—but in France, the home of sparkling music and brilliant comedy, are there no more Offenbachs in it? I fear not. Opera-bouffe is as dead as the empire whose latter days it electrified. Don't you believe those awfully “cultured” people who tell you that there is no music in Offenbach's operas. Ask them what the “Sabre Song” is, if it is not one of the greatest military strains ever composed. Ask them what the “Love Letter” chorus is, if not most original and beautiful music. Any true lover of music can pick out dozens of such gems from the great Frenchman's works. Touching this same *chef-d'œuvre*, “La Grande Duchesse,” it was the greatest satire ever penned against the German nation, has never been forgiven by that nation, and was the prime cause of the Franco-Prussian war. You no doubt

think it incredible that two nations should go to war over a comic opera, but you forget how mad we all are, French, English and German alike. Why, have not we English gone to war with poor ignorant blacks for no cause at all?

As to "Minetta," "the highly successful comic opera," its music was stale jingle, its plot *nil*, as far as I could discern, its dialogue weak where it was not dirty, and its exponents unmitigated duffers. The female performers had never been taught the principles of correct pronunciation, and consequently I had not the smallest idea of what they were saying. They chattered away, but a lot of magpies chattering in a park shrubbery would have been equally as intelligible. The men were a little better—that is to say, one could make out what they were talking about. But they could not act. They looked simply what they were, a lot of music-hall singers out of their element.



The widow having given me permission to go out and enjoy a cigarette during the second *entr'acte*, I adjourned to the saloon. There I met Tom Pierce. Tom, I may state, is a "society novelist," also dramatic critic for a society journal, and aspiring dramatist.

"What do you think of the opera?" he asked.

"Can't make head or tail of it," I replied.

"Oh, I am not talking of the scrip, I mean how do you like the music? No one looks for plot in comic operas now a days."

"I can't discover any music either," I said.

"Well, it's not the most original music certainly," confessed Tom. "But no one looks for original music in comic operas nowadays. But just think of the way little Carrie de Smythe sings 'Come kiss me who dares.' That is enough to draw the town."

"Carrie de Smythe! and you think *she* can sing?" I cried in astonishment. "Why, she can't *talk*, much less sing."

“Well, I admit she is not a Patti.”

“She hasn’t the slightest idea of acting,” I went on.

“But, my dear boy, no one expects good acting or singing in comic opera nowadays,” exclaimed Tom. “All we want now is to see a lot of fine women in tights, who can rattle off catchy songs, and one or two knock-about comedians. Comic opera is quite a different thing to what it was in the days of Julia Mathews.”

“Indeed it is,” I said, “a very different thing. In fact all the comic element has run out of it.”

“Oh! I don’t know so much about that,” said Tom. “‘Minetta’ draws all London, and will continue to do so probably until Christmas. You cannot call a piece bad under those circumstances. The composer tried his hand at serious work, but starved on it. He wrote ‘Minetta,’ and is making eighty pounds a week.”

“Yes, I suppose we must look at it in that way. The drama’s laws the drama’s patrons give. It is the same now as in Pope’s time; but still, ‘Minetta’ is not an opera.”

“I never said it was,” replied Tom, and then the electric bell sounded, and we returned to our seats.

I wonder if Tom will ever have a play produced? He has been pestering managers for fully ten years with his MS., but never with success. Curious, what a number of novelists there are who are ambitious of dramatic honours. Yet how few of them ever make any success as playwrights. Tom may succeed yet. He has youth on his side, and besides, is not wholly dependent upon his pen. God help him if he was!

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Wilson told me to-day that it has come to her knowledge that a conspiracy is being hatched by some of the wisest and

fiercest mammas in London, for the capture of little Towers. They have resolved that he won't leave town unmarried.

"You must warn him," said the widow.

"Why should I?" I asked.

"Simply because it is so unfair."

"Unfair! Surely little Towers can take care of himself?"

"Oh! you don't know what I mean at all," said the widow. "I mean it is unfair to our own county girls. They have the right to him—or at least some one of them has," and the little widow smiled.

"How would you like——?" I stopped in time I thought, but not so.

"What!" she cried, flushing with anger, "do you for one moment suppose, Mr. Brownlow, that I should ever think of marrying Mr. Towers! Answer me?" and she stamped her little foot.

"No, no, not at all, Mrs. Wilson," I hastened to say, "believe me, such a thought

never for a moment entered my head. As for little Towers, he will do very well for some silly girl with a craving for money, but I trust such a charming woman as yourself——”

“There, that will do,” she cried, all dimples once more. “I don’t wish to hear any more. You are forgiven.”



## CHAPTER XIX.

### THOSE YANKEES.

I HAVE always been under the impression that America will be a very fine country when it is finished, provided it is not spoiled in the making. And somehow or another I incline to the belief that it will be so spoiled, for the Yankee madness is very mad indeed. Understand, I use the word *Yankee* because the Yankees are the *people*. The *people* of America are all Yankees, which is saying that they are all horribly vulgar, fearful liars, and disgusting braggarts. The American *ladies* and *gentlemen*—the Southerners—are the nicest creatures in the world. But as I have before stated, you must judge of a country by its *people*—its *commonality*—to use a good old English expression, now

seldom uttered save by the Irish peasant. For a long time I was under the impression that the Yankee's brag anent his country and its stupendous greatness and superiority over every country on the face of the earth, and England in particular, was only so much "side,"—that he only praised his country as a matter of principle. But I have changed my mind. They really believe what they say. I was convinced of this in the following way. A troupe of Christy Minstrels came over here from New York. Some music-hall would have been the proper place for them, but they elected to open at the most famous theatre in the world—Drury Lane. I cannot understand what the manager was thinking about when he let them the house in question, but anyhow, let it he did. Now, as all the world knows, the Drury Lane theatre has always been a fashionable house when there is anything good on its stage. As all the world knows, it was nothing less

than sacrilege to allow a lot of men with corked faces to appear on its honoured boards. Well, when the Yankee agent in advance arrived he called all the hands "in front" together, and thus addressed them. At least, the following was the purport of his remarks. (The "hands" were the check-takers, cloak-room attendants, and box-keepers.) "Now, good people, I want you all to be particular with the audiences which will visit this house during the stay of the —— Minstrels. You must be very polite and civil, because the people who will attend will be *superior to those who are in the habit of attending here!*" And he believed every word he said. He believed that these miserable black-faced Yankees would draw a more fashionable audience than even Garrick, Kean, Kemble, or any other "stars" ever drew to Drury Lane! Ah dear! what a dire failure they were, poor fellows! And the manager stated that the failure was due



to want of taste and refinement in the Londoners. Yes, the Yankees are very mad indeed. Funny to read their theatrical papers when they treat of English actors and actresses. The Yankee critics affect to be very much disgusted with the "English accent" on the stage. Fancy a lot of half-educated scribblers, who talk with a twang which puts one's teeth on edge, professing to find great offence in the English accent! The question is, how should the English language be spoken—with an English accent or a Yankee one?

But I think the greatest fun of all is their "Society" papers. These papers are quite as amusing as the "Society" itself. Society! Well, there is a sort of Society—as we in England understand the term—in the South, where many of the old slave-holders still dwell, but the so-called "society" which these precious journals treat of is composed of the most shoddy lot of men and women

which it has been my misfortune to meet withal. Now, some of our own cheap society papers are open to ridicule occasionally, but still, when they give us details of people, those people are *somebodies*. The Yankee "Society" journals give the most minute particulars about nobodies. Here lies a paper printed in New York. I take an item of its "Society Gossip" at random: "Miss Lillian Schaltz has returned from school at Boston, and will remain with her parents until the Fall." There is an important bit of social gossip! Here is another gem: "Mr. Jeff Goode, the eminent orange-grower, is laid up with a bilious attack." And yet another: "Mrs. John Washington Dibbs, one of the Queens of New York society, eats two eggs, a round of toast, and drinks two large cups of coffee for her breakfast."

The entire paper is made up of garbage of this description. Shocking as it appears to

us, the Yankees think it the *crème de la crème* of "society" gossip. And is not "one of the Queens of New York society" distinctly precious! How greedy of praise they are too! I have noticed of late that in almost every new play produced in London there is an American character. This character is always a cool, highly-polished, brave, cynical and altogether "good" sort of fellow. "Why is this thus?" I asked Tom Pierce. "Don't you know?" he replied. "Why, don't you see, America has become a great market for English dramatic ware, *but* no play will be successful there unless it has an American character in it. And the said character must have most of the *fat*."

The Land of the Free! And they want to banish all the English actors from the country! The home of the brave! And they are afraid to allow an English teapot into their port lest it should take a cent out of some Yankee tinker's pocket. But what can

you expect from a nation of wooden nutmeg makers and patent "ironclad lemon squasher" manufacturers? What American would purchase his own country's goods if he could get those made in England? The land of the free and the home of the brave! Bah!

Do you know what makes me incensed against these poor mad Yankees? Well, the fact is this, the little widow has informed me that the Duchess of Stanton's uncle—the old creature we saw in her grace's box—has at last turned Turk. He insisted on being introduced to her grace's friends. She refused, and told the old man not to come near her for the future. The upshot of all this is that, for pure spite, the old boor has sent to America for another niece, whom he has announced as his heiress, and, worst of all, has actually taken a place in our county! The place in question is called Beechley Wold, and is within three miles of Brownlow and two miles

of Stanton Castle. Fancy having this man and his Yankee niece as neighbours! Certainly Peter Butts—that's the old beggar's name—is *not* a Yankee, having been born and bred in London, but he is a vulgar cockney, which is equally as bad. It appears that his brother, her grace's father, ran away to sea when fourteen, deserted his ship at New York, and eventually found himself in Chicago, where in due time he grew wealthy and died, leaving all his money to his only daughter, now her Grace of Stanton.



## CHAPTER XX.

### VERY LOW COMEDY.

TOM PIERCE, who is on the look-out for "comic business" for a comedy he is at work on, intends visiting the Caddington Vestry Hall to-night, and has asked me if I would like to accompany him. He says it is delightful fun to hear and see the creatures who are called vestrymen. I expect it is, and have accordingly promised to go. Tom was to call for me at seven.

Here he is.

\* \* \* \* \*

Well, here we are in the Vestry Hall, and in that part known as the "gallery," from whence we can see the "whole show," as Tom says. The gallery is filled with an audience composed of local ratepayers, who

are joking and chaffing like a lot of costermongers in the "top" of Old Drury on a Boxing Night.

"What's on to-night, Ted?" asks a gentleman in a straw hat and no collar.

"Oh, a regular barney," answers Ted, who is evidently an undertaker. "Yur see, Jack Bung has come 'ome from his 'olidays, an' is going to give it 'em all straight fur movin' a resolution in 'is absence."

"Wot resolution?" queries Straw-hat.

"Donno; but you'll 'ear all about it now. Here's 'em all."

And then we notice below us in the "hall" the usual assortment of snub-nosed, bottle-nosed, long-nosed, red-nosed, flat-nosed, and fat-nosed gentry, who, by some mysterious agency, are destined to become vestrymen. When the bald-headed, hatchet-faced chairman is seated, Mr. Jack Bung—all cuffs, collars, and whiskers—rises to state his grievance.

“Sir,” says Mr. Bung, pointing his stumpy forefinger at the chair as if he was going to denounce *it*; “it has come to my knowledge that during my absence and *sojourn* at Margate, a certain click of individuals in this room—(cries of “Name!” “Order!” and laughter)—has been making abortive resolutions against me. Now I say, Mr. Chair, that these persons told lies.”

Here a number of vestrymen rise excitedly and jabber forth all together, while some of us in the gallery call out, “Sit down, and give the man a chance,” and “Now then, Tickell with the glass eye, sit down, or I’ll tell your wife you’ve been drinking.” This last sally causes a roar of laughter, while Mr. Tickell glares through his glass eye up at the gallery. When the Chair succeeds in gaining silence, a stout moon-faced man rises and remarks :

“Wot I say is this, Mr. Chair. Mr. Bung says he were at Margate when a certing reso-



lution was brought against him. Now, as I 'appens to know, Mr. Bung wasn't at Margate at all at the time, but in the private bar of the Spotted Dog."

Great laughter in the gallery, mingled with cries of "Good old Spot!" Meanwhile Mr. Bung is gesticulating at an awful rate, and is evidently denouncing some one, but not a word can be heard, so great is the uproar.

Silence once more restored, Mr. Bung cries, "That is a deliberate, unadulterated, cowardly lie!" Terrible uproar, mingled with cries of "Turn him out!" "Chair!" "Apologise!" After a spell, order once more reigns, and Mr. Bung apologises to the moon-faced man, who nods his head in response. "As for Mr. Tickell," continues Mr. Bung, "he has always been dead against me" (Mr. Tickell here starts to his feet, but is held out of order by the chair). "He has before now been down upon me, yet I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that Mr. Tickell has

rented his 'ouse since eighteen-seventy-two at one hundred and twenty pounds, and has only been rated at sixty pounds. What do you think of that? And this is the man who is the soul of honour and honesty, and the deacon of a chapel too!"

Great laughter among us in the gallery and considerable uproar downstairs. A flat-nosed man rises to know "why Mr. Tickell's deaconship should be dragged in as a matter of privilege?"

MR. BUNG: I want to give you some facts.

FLATNOSE (*excitedly*): We don't want your facts.

MR. BUNG (*smiling*): I know you don't. (*Great laughter from gallery.*)

Order being restored, a red-headed, goggle-eyed man jumps up and cries excitedly:

"Fair play! I demand fair play for Mr. Bung."

"Oh, oh!" exclaims Mr. Tickell, "why

don't you pat 'im on the back and say,  
'Wire in, Jack—wollop the bloomin' lot!'"

Great uproar downstairs and peals of laughter from the gods.

"Is this man," continues Mr. Tickell, pointing to Mr. Bung, "to be allowed to dig up the past career of members of this vestry? Why, Bung forgot altogether to have his house, No. 6, Brick Row, assessed!"

"Don't you lie—you liar!" shouts Mr. Bung, rising, while the air resounds with laughter from the gallery and cries of "Order!" and "Silence!" from the hall.

"It is not a lie!" roars Mr. Tickell. "And if you call me a liar again I'll break your jawr!"

Terrible excitement—two members holding Mr. Bung's coat-tails to keep him from rushing at Mr. Tickell, who is being held down by three able-bodied men. Now a bull-dog-faced man cries: "We have no confidence in the chairman who allows this sort of thing

to go on." Then thunders of disapproval from all sides, mingled with cries of "Turn him out!" "Don't insult the chair!" "Bravo, Noddle!" Meanwhile the unfortunate chairman, who by this time is fairly done up, rises and says:

"I move that we proceed to the next business."

VOICE (*from gallery*): Go home, you bloom-in' josser!

CHAIRMAN (*sternly*): I'm not speaking to the gallery.

MR. TICKELL: Why don't you obey the chair, Bung?

BUNG: I don't care a button for you or the chair.

CHAIRMAN (*livid*): Mr. Bung says he doesn't care a button for the chair!

BUNG: No more I don't.

Cheers and laughter from the gallery; and then a clean-shaven man, dressed in a rather "sporty" style, rises and observes:

"I see we can get no business done. Let us dry up and go home."

"Don't be a fool!" cries Mr. Bung.

"I say, Bung has called Mouldy a fool!" exclaims Mr. Tickell, whereupon there is more confusion, the gallery expressing its delight by shouting, "Good old Bung!" "Give it 'em 'ot!" "Now then, glass-eye, shut up!" and other painful remarks.

CHAIRMAN (*with dignity*): I'll leave the room (*exit*).

VOICE (*from gallery*): Bung, collar the chair, old chap!

MR. TICKELL (*glaring at gallery*): Shut up.

The uproar is now so terrific that I tell Tom I must leave.

"I can't stand any more of it," I say.

"Neither can I," he replies, and we both make the best of our way into the street.

"Well, what do you think of *that*?" he asks, as the hansom hurries us away. "Nice lot of people to have control as vestrymen, eh?"

“Ah! my dear Tom, is it not terrible madness?”

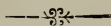
“Madness!” he exclaims; “is that what you call it? *I* call it humour—the humour of the lower orders. A vestry meeting is the lowest of low comedy, and ratepayers would resent any departure from established custom. They go to their vestry hall as you or I go to a theatre—to be amused.”

“And what was all the row about to-night!”

“Heaven alone knows.”

“Why, don’t the vestrymen know what they were fighting about?”

“Not they,” he answers; “if they did there would not be half the fun.”



## CHAPTER XXI.

### PAUL'S CONFESSION.

MAD as myself, ay, a madder man than ever I can hope to be, is Paul Joyce. I dined with him last night at his chambers in Caxton Inn. After dinner he began on his Monarchy of Intellect craze.

"You know, Phil, as well as I do, that if the countries of Europe were all governed by men of intellect there would be peace all round. What is Europe now? An armed camp."

"I don't dispute that fact at all," I said.

"No ; well, do you for one moment believe that the good God made these beautiful countries for the sole purpose of being utilised as drilling-grounds for soldiers of the czar, the emperor, or the king, as the case

may be? No. Do you think that Jesus of Nazareth died upon the Cross to save mankind for the purpose of making us fight each other to the death—to slay each other, Phil, for the pleasure of kings and emperors?—because that is what it amounts to. Ah! my dear fellow, these things want looking into.”

“Of course they do,” I remarked. “And now tell me what you have been doing this year. I wanted to ask you when you dined with me, but you were so full of your mission——”

“Yes, that’s the word,” and Paul nodded his head with approval.

“Well, now I want to hear about yourself. How is it you have not married?”

“Why are *you* not married?” he answered quickly.

“Well, I can scarcely answer that question. I *don’t* know why, unless that I never met with any woman who has made me think of



marriage. But you, Paul, you know you told me six years ago you were in love with some woman."

"Ah! for Heaven's sake don't talk of *her*!" he exclaimed, rising and walking up and down the room—an old habit of his.

"I'm sorry I have mentioned the subject," I said; "but you know you used to tell me all about it."

"Yes, yes, but it's all over now," and Paul sat down again. "I have lost her—lost her for ever; and all my own fault, Phil, that's the worst part of it; *that's* what drives me mad when I think of it. My God! what an idiot I was! Oh, what an idiot I was!" and the poor fellow actually trembled with emotion.

"Well, there, we all have our troubles, Paul—there is no man on this earth who has not a thorn festering in his heart—not a woman who has not some dark sorrow hidden away from all."

“Yes, you are right; but think of what my grief must be when I tell you that it was all my own utter idiotcy which lost me the only girl who could have made my life worth living. Fancy my loving a woman—and such a woman—for five years, yet never telling her of my love!”

“What!” I exclaimed in astonishment.

“Fact, Phil.”

“Well, my dear fellow, what was your idea?”

“Idea, Phil, *idea*? What was my madness, you mean. Away from her, I was in misery; with her, I affected a coolness—a *nonchalance*, that’s the only word for it.”

“Ah! I expect you were shy and nervous,” I said, “and tried to hide it by an appearance of coldness. I remember you wrote to me once stating something of the sort.”

“Yes;” and then after a pause, “she grew tired of my coolness at last, and——”

“Married?”

“Left England for India with her brother. I daresay she is married to some happy beggar by this time. And now, Phil, let us talk of something else.”

We were soon deep in the Monarchy of Intellect again. What a blessing he has got this madness to keep him alive.

On my way homeward I thought of that letter he sent me, some years ago, and remembered that it was with one or two other curious letters in a small pocket-book in my desk.

It lies before me now. At the time it was written, Paul was in far better spirits than ever he will be again, yet I can trace a touch of sadness in this “confession.”

“DEAR PHIL,

“I want you to help me. Don’t start, this is not a begging letter. I simply want your advice on a very delicate matter. The fact is, I have been for a long time very

much in LOVE. Now, I want you to particularly understand that this is not a mere case of *spooneyism* ; it is real, earnest, downright love, deep as a draw-well. SHE is an angel — a kind-hearted, gentle angel — to everybody but *me*. That's whiat's the matter. I *know* she is not a flirt ; if she was one, I could understand her. What is she like? Well,

“She's not very dark, and she's not very fair,  
She's rather a sort of a blend ;  
Her eyes they are blue, and her free wavy hair  
Is as brown as my briar with the bend.  
She's not very tall—just ‘as high as my heart,’  
But she shouldn't be shorter or taller.  
And now I have given a true life-like *carte*  
Of my dear little—what-do-you-call-her.

The above, I may tell you, forms a portion of a string of verses which I wrote and sent her, and which she was pleased to say were ‘rather good ;’ but she must have been in good humour at the time, for when next I saw her she informed me that she thought my verses ‘very impertinent,’ and actually

handed them back to me, with the remark that she 'did not want them.' But, curious to relate, within a month from the time she handed them to me, she wrote asking me for them again. Well, Phil, you know what the bad young man with the tenor voice sings in the opera, '*La Donna l Mobile.*' Some fellow has written somewhere or other, that the world has been rolling and rolling for thousands of years, and that earth, air and water have given up their secrets to man, but that woman—remains as great a mystery as ever. Now, I don't think Gentle Will ever wrote a better bit than that, and *he* knew a thing or two about the sex.

"I once thought that I *did* understand HER; but, goodness, *what* a mistake I made! She seemed always so glad to see me, wrote to me so often, and sent me *so* many little boxes of flowers, gathered by her own fair hands, and—and all that sort of thing, don't you know. So, I wrote her a long letter,

telling her that I thought she cared for me, and that I *adored* her. Good heavens! what a reply I received. Talk of rage, that little angel was MAD.\* The idea of my ‘daring to think that she ever cared about me in any way,’ it would be ‘excruciatingly funny were it not so horribly impertinent,’ &c. Such a scorching, sneering, biting, bitter letter no fellow ever received from woman before. It drove me clean out of England. I wandered from place to place for twelve months, lonely and miserable. After all, my dear Phil, was there anything very wrong in my telling her that I thought she cared for me? Was it really impertinence? Do men ever propose to women without having some idea that they will be accepted? Should I have spoken to her alone in the twilight with nobody by but ourselves, instead of having written? These are some of the things I want to know.

\* Of course she was—and is. P. B.

“Well, when twelve months had passed I ventured to write to her, saying that I hoped she was quite well (just as if nothing had occurred, you know), and that I thought of returning to England and buying a farm (I always had a mania\* for farming, you know); I told her of the sort of farm I should go in for, and the county it should be in. I don't know what made me bother her with all this—do you? After about a month she wrote me a sneering letter, anent my ridiculous ideas on farming, and stated that if I really *did* want to go in for what I knew nothing about, it would be as well to take a place in Ireland or Wales where land was cheap.

“I don't know why all this should have enraged me so,† but enrage me it did, and I sat down and wrote her a *blazing* letter, requesting her never to write to me again.

\* Alas! farming is not his madness now. P. B.

† I do. P. B.

Yes, Phil, I did *that*—and for the next six months was the most miserable man on the face of the earth. Fancy my requesting the one woman on this earth who could make me happy, never to write to me again! And she did not—until Christmas, when she sent me a *beautiful* Christmas card, God bless her! with ‘Best wishes’ and her initials in her own handwriting on the back. Now, what do you think of that? Peace on Earth, and Goodwill unto Men—yes, I felt like that, Phil, on that Christmas morning. How I treasured that little bit of pasteboard—how I carried it about in my inside pocket!\* What were all the masterpieces in all the galleries in Europe compared to it?

“I wrote her such a long letter thanking her ‘ever so much’ for her kindness in remembering me. But she never replied. Yes, I felt that, Phil—felt it very much. But I *would* not write again, and I *did* not

\* Did he mean his stomach? P. B.



write again—that is, not until I was about to return to England, when I wrote a few lines and posted them to her. Three days brought me an envelope with the well-known handwriting, and which contained one of her *visiting-cards*, on the back of which was written, ‘If you are coming to London, of course *we* shall be glad to see you.’ It was not very encouraging, but it made my heart jump again. I returned to England, and would you believe it, Phil, it was four months ere I could muster up courage to visit HER. Yes, a great over-grown five-foot-tenner of a man, afraid of a little woman. How mad\* I was with myself.

“At length I wrote, stating that I would call on such a day. The season was over, and they had gone down to the country. Back came an answer from there, stating that she was *glad* I was back again in Old England, and giving me *full* directions as

\* Mad you *are*, not with, but *in* yourself. P. B.

to getting down to their place, which, she added, was 'looking lovely, especially the garden.' Down I went. Phil, if you only knew all the nice things, all the pretty speeches I had prepared to whisper into her shelly ear! Did I whisper one of them? Not one. When I met her I was as nervous as nervous could be, but I assumed an air of extreme coolness. Now will you explain this? \* And after dinner we walked together in the garden, in the nice old-fashioned country twilight, and instead of saying all I had to say, I simply puffed away at a cigarette, mad idiot that I was.† Here was I beside the woman who for months past had never been absent from my thoughts, and I put on an air of boredom! Suddenly she suggested that it was time to return to the house, and back we walked in silence. When leaving to catch the last train for London, I bid her good-bye in a 'happy to meet you,

\* Certainly. You're mad. P. B.      † Hear, hear! P. B.

I'm sure,' kind of way, though my heart was thumping against my side like a hammer. Ah! how pretty she looked as she stood at the door.

"In a week's time I sat down and wrote some verses to her. They were good, Phil; I *knew* they were. I sent them to her saying I would run down to see her again in a couple of weeks—and I did. After dinner, we sat in the twilight under a tree, on the lawn—I smoking a cigarette, being too nervous to do anything else. Suddenly, out she brought those verses. I felt myself blushing, and it made me angry.

"‘Ahem! You know the verses,’ she asked. ‘Yes, they are rather good, are they not?’ I replied *quite coolly*.

"‘They *are* good,’ she continued, ‘*very* good, and the lady you mention in them is——’

"What *was* it she said then? It might have meant nothing, but this I know, it set my heart bounding with joy. And yet it

was such a peculiar expression, and said so quickly that were I offered millions of money to remember it, I could not do so. What answer did I make her? None. Good heavens, Phil! I sat so close to her that her hair brushed my shoulders, and I never even — Oh, God, what an idiot I was. In another moment she rose, and said with a sharp tinge in her voice, that it was time to return to the house. On leaving that night, she handed me a little bunch of white roses. The next day I wrote her a long letter, telling her how much I loved her, and asking her to make my miserable life happy. Back came a short, curt note from her stating that she had ‘thought and hoped I would have never alluded to *that* subject again,’ and that ‘she would always remain my *friend*, but as for being anything further,’ &c., &c.

“That letter regularly knocked me up for a fortnight. *Then* came a *long* letter from her asking me when I ‘intended coming down

to see them all.' I wrote a short note stating that I was too seedy to go at present. Back came a letter telling me that my reason was a 'foolish one,' and that she never would ask me to visit her again. To this I wrote a bitter reply, for my heart was sore, Phil. Oh! *what* a letter I received *then*. Filled with such sentences as 'ignorance and presumption,' 'vanity and impertinence,' &c. All this ending with reference to my 'abhorrent ways and thoughts,' and a request to refrain from writing to her again. You may be sure I did *not* write again. And, what do you think? —in a month's time came a large envelope from her filled with rose leaves! Not a scrap of writing, save the address on the envelope. Now what am I to do? It is a fortnight since I received it. Drop me a long letter, Phil, telling me what I ought to do, and what you think of the whole business.

"Yours as ever,

"PAUL JOYCE."

I answered this letter on the day I received it. I told him the woman loved him *madly*, as of course she did. Any man could see that, who took the trouble of doing so. Wonder did he try to take my advice, which was to go in and win.



## CHAPTER XXII.

BY THE SAD SEA WAVES.

I QUITE forgot to bid good-bye to little Mrs. Wilson, on coming to Hastings. I hope the little creature will not feel offended. Fact is, I came away in a hurry. Getting weary of continual dinners, balls and receptions, and, in fact, feeling *too indisposed* to attend any more, I called upon Dr. Jacob Saltt, the eminent physician, and stated my case as follows :

“Dr. Saltt, these are my symptoms—drowsiness and disinclination to rise in the morning before eleven ; sleeplessness at night ; sense of fulness in the stomach after meals ; dryness of tongue after smoking ; feverish thirst in morning after late supper, and constant longing for the sea.”

"Let me feel your pulse, Mr. Brownlow," said the doctor, pulling out his watch and seizing my wrist.

He held me thus for fully a minute, as he fixed his eyes on the second hand of his watch.

"Have you ever had any illness before?" he asked.

"Several times."

"You have a wish for the sea?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, my advice is that you leave town for Hastings or St. Leonards as soon as possible."

"Thanks; good morning."

To write letters to all who expected my company during the week did not take me long. A brief note to Tom Pierce, asking him to put a paragraph in one or two of the social journals announcing my hasty journey to the south coast by my "physician's urgent advice," and off I started; and here



I am. Never felt better in my life, but this *entre nous*.

This is my first visit to Hastings, and with the help of God it will be my last. The place absolutely reeks with 'Arries and their sisters, cousins and aunts. You could walk for a mile over their bodies as they lie on the shingle by the very muddy sea. Man, woman and child lie there from ten o'clock in the morning until one in the afternoon, when they retire to gorge themselves with roast pork and apple dumplings, washed down by four-ale. After dinner, back they go again to their shingly beds. And such costumes! The girls—mostly greasy Jewesses with the most awful noses—dressed in white or blue "sailor costumes," with sailor caps, dirty stockings and canvas shoes. The men—poor half-starved, washed-out looking fellows, with the longest necks and the biggest mouths I have ever seen—all dressed alike—and there are some thousands of them

—in boating costumes (flannel trousers and knitted guernsey jacket, surmounted by a tennis coat, generally all white and blue stripes, tennis shoes, and a straw hat with flaring band). The joke of this is that none of them ever enter a boat.

Besides the carpet of these *canaille* spread along the beach, there is a very large army of them always on the move up and down the promenade. They amuse themselves by firing stones at their friends below on the beach, who return the compliment. Hence, there is a continuous shower of stones to be observed, and occasionally felt, all day long.

“Where on earth do all these people come from?” I asked one of the waiters here yesterday.

“Mostly from London, sir.”

“They must ruin the place.”

“That they do, sir. The summer season in Hastings is done for. These ‘cheap-

trippers,' as we calls 'em here, have finished it."

"Why, have they not always been with you in the summer?" I asked.

"Oh, dear, no, sir; only this last three years. These class of folks takes a long time to find out a new holiday place, but they find it out in the end."

"And then?"

"And then all the *good* people give it the go-by. We 'ave our winter visitors still, sir—all first-class; but them who used to stay here in the summer now go to Eastbourne."

Foreigners are always wondering at the "exclusiveness" of the English. Let some of them come here to Hastings and view our 'Arries as they lie with their 'Arriets in lines along the shingle, and I'll wager our English exclusiveness will no longer be an object of wonderment.

Why on earth did I come here? Was it because I was madder than usual? That

must be the reason. To be sure, I had a wish to escape any further balls and dinners, and yet could not bring myself to quit town ere any of the others from my county did so. Still, why not have told old Saltt that I had a craving for travel? He might have sent me to Paris! But one never does what one really ought to do.

I have been here but two days, and already I am suffering from the most acute attack of *ennui*. There is absolutely nothing to do—no way to amuse oneself. As for enjoying a walk on the promenade, or through the shingle, *that* is out of the question while 'Arry is abroad; and as for boating, who could think of boating, or bathing, in that muddy water? I wonder do the natives of Hastings know what a real sea is like? Have they the smallest idea of the great green curling breakers, bursting with a roar into sheets of foam, which gallop up the beach at the rate of

sixty miles an hour, and then glide slowly back again, leaving tiny pink shells glittering in the shining sand? Ah! for the real strand and the real green sea, with sea-gulls white and grey floating on its bosom, and seven miles of a yellow beach to thunder upon, and with phantom schooners to be seen by moonlight, all white-winged, and fairy barques to be seen in the dawn, with brilliant rosy sails. And ever and ever, night and day, the distant thunder of the mad, mad waves. Hush! can you not hear them now, as they sound through twenty years of time? I never saw anything more like weak pea-soup than the sea at Hastings.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. WILSON APPEARS.

My bedroom window looks out upon the gay and festive beach—the “Sands” it is called here, Heaven alone knows why, for sand proper on Hastings shore there is none, the beach being entirely formed of gravel (or shingle), and mud. It is a sweltering noon, yet there lie all the ‘Arries and their girls on the burning shingle, under the blazing sun. And music! ——

The “hall porter” is a regular linguist—knowing all Continental languages, besides several Hindoo and Arabic dialects. It is almost needless to say he is an Irishman. I had full proof of this yesterday morning while enjoying a cigar on the hotel steps. One of those instruments of torture called

a piano-organ was being operated upon by an impudent-looking and particularly greasy Italian, while a brazen-faced girl in a short red dress and gaudy head-gear stood by leering at me. My friend the hall porter appeared on the scene, and after giving the pair a piece of his mind in choice Italian, ordered them away. Cursing him in musical Tuscan, they went their way, and then the porter turned to me and remarked:

“This is the devil’s own town for music, sur.” So saying, he retired.

He was right; it *is* the very devil’s town for music. From my window here I can count the following, ranged at intervals along the promenade:—Three little girls playing fiddles; five niggers, with banjo, bones and tambourine; two “mysterious minstrels,” with an American organ on a donkey-cart; a blind harpist; a ditto flautist; two more niggers; three piano-organs; and last of all the Hastings Band, composed of about six-

teen brass instruments—all going together! It is the maddest town I have ever been in. Mad, and yet how miserably dull! I do wish little Mrs. Wilson was here; her prattle would be a change for the better. Well, I suppose I had better go down to the steps again, and have another weed; there seems to be nothing else to do.

\* \* \* \* \*

Who would have thought it? While sitting smoking just now, the 'bus arrived from the station, and out popped—Mrs. Wilson!

“You wretch!” she exclaimed, while the dimples played all over her face. “Fancy coming down here to enjoy yourself all alone. And never telling any one you were going.”

“My dear Mrs. Wilson,” I cried, “I’m delighted to see you.” Which I was.

“I don’t believe you are,” she answered, more dimply than ever, as she tripped into the hotel, followed by her maid.

\* \* \* \* \*



Thank goodness, I've now got some one to talk to, and listen to. The little widow is delightful to listen to. I have promised to show her the promenade and pier. And here she is, ready for the walk. Wonderful taste in dressing! She stands before me, the best-dressed woman in Hastings.

"Here I am," she says. "And now please take great care of me in this strange place."

"Certainly," I exclaim, offering my arm. "If any man dare even look at you, his life shall pay the forfeit."

We stroll along the parade criticizing the shops and people until we come to the pier. Here we sit down on one of the seats facing the sea.

"What a curious lot of people there are here," says the widow. "They remind one of the picture of Margate Sands."

"Yes," I say. "Hastings is now quite as bad as Margate in the summer time."

"Well, why did you come here?" queries the widow.

"Ordered by my doctor. But *why* did *you* come here?"

"Oh, I really don't know;" and the little widow is positively blushing and evidently confused.

As sure as anything she has come down here bent on some mischief. There is a man in the question, I could swear. Who is he? Must keep my weather-eye open.

"By the way, Mr. Towers has gone down," she says, for the purpose of changing the conversation, I presume.

"Has he? Then he was not captured after all?"

"No; he escaped before the plot was ripe," and the widow smiles a wicked smile. "You know," she continues, "I don't think Mr. Towers is quite such a fool as he looks."

"Oh, indeed he is not," I say. "He has lots of brains."

"You know, I don't think he would be such a bad match at all," and the widow looks at me thoughtfully.

"I should think not," I answer. "Forty thousand a year and a lovely house is not to be despised."

"Oh, I'm not thinking of the money," she exclaims sharply, "nor of the lovely house, as you call it."

"No?" This I say in a tone of query.

"No," she exclaims with a pettish look, "I think Mr. Towers would be just as nice without money."

"As nice a husband, do you mean?"

"Yes," with a snap.

"Yes, if his wife had money," I say.

"What do you mean?" she exclaims with flashing eyes.

"What do I mean, Mrs. Wilson? Why, what I say. What on earth is there to get angry about? You say——"

"Oh, never mind what I said," she cries

in a perfect blaze of anger. "Do for goodness' sake, let us change the conversation. I did not come down here to be pestered about Mr. Towers or Mr. Anybody Else."

"My dear Mrs. Wilson, surely you will own that it was not I who commenced——"

Up she jumps from the seat.

"Since you persist in continuing the subject I will leave you," she says with flushed face and flashing eyes, and then hurries away.

Was ever such a mad little woman heard of before? She actually begins a conversation about a man, and because I quite agree with her in everything she says concerning him, she flies into a rage!

As I walk back along the promenade, I come upon her, seated, listening to a band of niggers. She smiles when she catches sight of me, and I immediately hasten towards her.

"Well, I hope you have got over your nasty temper," she says.

“*My* nasty temper? Well, come, that’s  
\_\_\_\_\_”

“There, there, I forgive you,” she inter-  
rupts. “Sit down and listen to the *music*.”



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE PLEASURES OF ENGLISH TRAVELLING.

IF Towers has returned to the country, the ice is broken, so I am determined to start this afternoon. I tell Mrs. Wilson.

“How curious,” she exclaims, “I was just coming to tell you of my intended departure to-day.”

“No! why then we will travel together. How jolly!”

“Then you think I won’t be a nuisance?” she asks dimpling.

“Nuisance! My dear Mrs. Wilson, your companionship——”

“Ahem, and my maid’s,” she observes with a demure look.

“And your maid’s, will afford me the utmost pleasure.”

Thank Heaven, I can go back to dear old Brownlow at last. And no one can say I was the *first* to leave town. *That's* a blessed thought.

By-and-by, the 'bus lands us at the railway station — Mrs. Wilson, her maid and myself. We have a good ten minutes to spare, so we “pick and choose” our seats in the train.

“Let us get as far away from the engine as possible,” says the widow, “in case of a collision.”

We are barely seated when in jumps Tom Pierce.

“Why, where did you spring from?” I ask, and then introduce him to Mrs. Wilson.

“Oh, not from very far,” he answers, looking at me and then at the widow. “I came down by the midday mail yesterday for the purpose of writing a descriptive article on Hastings for the *Herald of Fashion*. They are doing the south coast watering-places in it.”

"You have certainly been very quick at gaining your knowledge of the place," remarks the widow.

"Well, the fact is, Mrs. Wilson, my coming down at all was a mere matter of form. I have been here scores of times. All I wanted was just one look round to see if there was any change."

"And have you found any?"

"No, except that there are even more 'Arries in evidence than was the case last season."

Here, quite *à propos*, enters a "sporting" 'Arry with an elaborate travelling rug.

"Would think he was bound on a journey to the North Pole," whispers the widow, who is evidently very much annoyed at his appearance.

'Arry, who sports a massive chain, a diamond ring and a horse-shoe pin, places the rug on a seat, while he sinks into the opposite one. His intention is evident. The



seat with the rug is for the repose of his feet.

The whole thing is very annoying. Here we were all to ourselves, nice and private, and now we will have to endure this unspeakable boor, probably all the way to town.

Tom, who hates this type of Englishmen with a fierce hatred, remarks :

“Pardon me, sir, but do you require two seats? I mean, is it absolutely requisite that your rug should occupy an entire seat all to itself? Because I should very much like to sit there.”

“Oh, that ’ere rug belongs to a friend of mine,” answers ’Arry with a grin. How is it these people never have two teeth together?

“And is your friend travelling in this train?” inquires Tom.

“Yas; he told me to secure a seat with his rug. He will be here in a jiffy.”

I know the man is telling lies, so does Tom.

“Is there time to find another carriage?” asks Mrs. Wilson in a tone which ought to have made 'Arry's blood run cold.

“If you ask *me*, I don't think there is, *miss*,” replies the latter.

He is right; at this moment the guard's whistle sounds, the engine gives a shriek and a snort, and then off we go slowly.

“Why, your friend is late,” cries Tom to 'Arry.

“Oh, 'e's all right,” answers the man.

“But let him have his rug,” and quick as thought Tom seizes the rug and heaves it out on to the platform. “There, now he will have his rug for the next train.”

“Why, damn it, sir, what have you done?” cries 'Arry choking with rage.

“Done?” answers Tom, “why, what you ought to thank me very much for. But for my presence of mind you would have left your friend rugless.”

“Oh, that be hanged!” cries 'Arry fuming.

And then little Mrs. Wilson fairly laughs outright, checking herself suddenly.

'Arry sees he has been "done," and sits glaring at us until we arrive at Tunbridge Wells, when he jumps out and enters the next compartment. Wonderful man, Tom Pierce. And now the widow has another merry little laugh.

"That was capital," she declares. "I never saw anything half so good. Now I hope we will remain undisturbed for the rest of the journey."

Alas, no! enter fiend number two. He is dressed in the latest fad of the tailors and wears an eye-glass, which after screwing into his left optic he fixes full on the widow, who returns a well-bred stare, which quite unnerves him, and his gaze wanders towards the maid. Then he drops the glass, settles himself well into his seat, cocks one leg over the other, pulls out his scented handkerchief, blows his nose and wipes his fore-

head, replaces his handkerchief in his breast pocket, being careful to allow a corner of it to stick out in the approved fashion.

By this time the train is on its way to London again, and Eye-glass surveys the scenery for some minutes. Then he lies back in his seat, and taking from his waistcoat pocket a gold toothpick commences excavations on his front grinders. This being accomplished, he pulls forth a silver cigar-case, and leaning over towards little Mrs. Wilson, asks with a sweet simper :

“Do you object to smoking, *miss* ?”

“Can’t say ; no gentleman has ever smoked in my presence,” answers the widow in a tone that could freeze a gallon of paraffin oil.

Eye-glass, looking awfully foolish, slowly replaces cigar case in his pocket ; then produces a comic paper, which he pretends to read for the rest of the journey to town.

Wonderful woman the widow !

## CHAPTER XXV.

### BACK AGAIN IN BROWNLOW.

THE autumn leaves are sport for the idle winds, the nights grow cold, and the sun is a laggard to rise and impatient to retire; the hoar-frost sparkles in millions of diamonds on the tall pines and dwarf palms on the lawn, and the beeches in the park look tawny and tired of life. Blue, black and brown are the stubbles on the hill-side with pigeon, plover and starling, while silent as death are the voiceless woods.

Summer is dead, and yet all her gifts are not buried with her. Nay, down by the river, lined with pollards, bulrushes and flags, and owning many a lusty trout in its secret pools, summer's children linger still. On the further bank runs a strag-

gling sort of thorn hedge, now and again divided by an elder bush or a mountain ash with its clusters of rubies flashing 'neath the great big copper sun; the white stems of the woodbines—its leaves now a glorious crimson—twining in and out among the haws, while the viburnums sparkle royal red here and there, and creeping through the underwood comes the pale green arum. Nearer to the water still lie patch and patch of more bright colours—wild mint, yarrow, willow weed (where the summer night moth has often paused), purple loosestrife and a wandering marigold, and there by a raft of lilies stands a heron motionless—fit emblem of silence and the tomb. For all this crimson glory is but the hectic-dyed mantle of the Herald of Death. Summer *is* dead, and her children are following quickly. Look! there falls a brown shower from that sturdy elm.

And this beautiful Summer now buried

in these dank sodden leaves, which we walk so silently over—think of her coming down from Heaven with her lap full of flowers and her warm scented breath, to transform our woods and fields into paradises, while we fly from her presence, turn our backs upon her glorious handiwork, and seek the close stifling atmosphere of dining-rooms and drawing-rooms in London. There we remain feasting and fiddling until our Heavenly visitor has gone and most of her gifts have grown old and cold. Then do we return to walk the sodden earth, which two short months ago was alive with life and colour. And *still* there are people who won't believe that we are all mad!

I met old Hemming, the gardener, yesterday evening, as the bronze sun was dipping down in the west. He was on his way homeward, after a hard day's work in little Towers's gardens. Feebler and feebler gets the poor old chap.

"Well, Hemming, how goes it with you now?"

"I be main tired o' nights, sir," he answered, "and I miss Susan now that the long darkness is coming. I most wish she hadn't a gone to Lunnon. I be gettin' old, sir," and he smiled faintly at me.

"Do you ever hear from your daughter?"

"Most every week, sir. She is a good girl, an' don't forget her faither. Why, sir, she sends parcels of things nigh every Saturday."

"And does she say how she likes London?"

"No, sir, no; she never says nothing about Lunnon, only she is quite well."

And then I left him. May he never know where the money comes from which buys those parcels. He has not long to live, poor old boy—let him die in peace.

Little Mrs. Wilson drove over yesterday.

"Those people have come," she informed me.



"What people?" I inquired.

"Why, those relatives of the duchess—the uncle and a new niece fresh from America. The duchess is raging," and she smiled a wicked smile. "It's rather awkward, you know, having low relations when you are a duchess."

"What's this the man's name is?" I said, for the idea of these people being near neighbours was and *is* far from pleasant.

"The man's name is Butts," replied the widow dimpling with fun. "*Butts*; nice name for the proprietor of Beechley Wold, isn't it?"

"Charming; why, Mrs. Wilson, it is enough to make old Harry Beechley sit up in his coffin. What is the girl like?"

"Haven't seen her yet, but her name is Carrie Dixon. That's not so bad."

"Dixon—no; though the 'Carrie' smacks of the music hall. Will you recognize them?"

"Oh, I don't know. They may not be so bad after all, and though a raw Yankee, Miss Dixon may be presentable enough."

"Quite so."

"Perhaps Miss Dixon might grace Brownlow House yet," said the widow with a merry laugh. "Who knows? These Yankee women are famous husband catchers."

"Do you think I am worth the catching, Mrs. Wilson?"

This question seemed to puzzle her a bit, for she did not answer for a moment. Then she said, "Oh, I don't know."

Then the conversation drifted into other matters, and she left after extracting a promise from me to tell her my candid opinion of Miss Dixon, when I had the opportunity of forming one.

The following letter was brought per mounted groom this afternoon:

“Woodbourn, September 30th.

“DEAR PHIL,

“I want you to come over and stay with us until you have had enough of us. Only came home last Monday. Shooting better than ever. Have not seen you this ever so long. Dad joins me in best wishes and a request for the honour of your company. Don't fail to come as soon as you possibly can, if not sooner.

“Yours in haste,

“SYDNEY BARTON.”

Why, let me see, it must be nearly two years since I saw Sydney. He was then very mad, though not so mad as his father, but I daresay he has improved since. He had left college and was about starting on a tour—a “grand tour” round Europe, and now he is back from his travels. Dear old boy, I certainly *will* go over to Woodbourn for a while, though old Miss Barton is such a she-

dragon. How that man, John Barton, can stand such a woman for twenty-four hours is a mystery ; but there, is he not, like us all, mad ?

Yes, go I will, for to tell the truth I am beginning to feel deucedly dull and lonely in this great gloomy house. Strange, why this should be so ; I used to feel cheerful, happy and comfortable enough.

Why, bless my soul, the widow forgot one of her driving gloves. Here it lies, fairy-like in size, and daintily-scented, with brown velvet bands down the back. What a small hand the little creature has got ! Must send it to her this evening ; stay, perhaps it would be more polite to take it myself in the morning.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### I LUNCH WITH THE WIDOW.

THE gossamer is sparkling in festoons along the hedgerows, and the October sun shines red and warm enough as I walk briskly along the road. I have sent my traps on to Woodbourn per dog-cart, and am going thither on foot myself. I intend taking Virgemont on my way, for the purpose of returning the widow her glove.

An hour's walk brings me to Virgemont gates, and five minutes' walk up the drive brings me to the house. There is the widow on a ladder, with dainty morning dress tucked up, as hammer in hand she is busy nailing some trailing plant to the wall. So busy is she that she does not hear my approach until I speak :

"Mrs. Wilson, you make a pretty picture."

She turns round all dimples.

"I *thought* you'd come," she exclaims.

"Oh, you did!"

"No, no," she says quickly. "What I meant to say was, that I thought you would bring me back my glove. Thank you very much; it was stupid of me to leave it. Would you mind holding the ladder while I get down?"

"Certainly."

She is down the six steps in a jiffy. Wonderful woman!

"Now come along," she says; "I want to show you my new piano."

"Oh, you've got a new piano, then?"

"Yes, and such a beauty; its tone is simply exquisite. You're fond of music, are you not?"

"Very."

"I thought you were. Oh, who do you think called to see me yesterday?"

"I give it up."

"Now, can't you try and guess?" she persisted.

"Can't for the life of me, unless it was Mr. Butts."

"No, it wasn't Mr. Butts; it was Mr. Towers."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes; and he has promised me a whole heap of cuttings for the garden. Isn't it kind of him?" and the widow looks at me with very open eyes.

"Very kind indeed; but how comes it that you have never asked *me* for any cuttings?"

"Oh, I don't know," she answers, and then after a pause, "Don't you think Mr. Towers nice-looking?"

"Yes, he has what I would call a pretty face—a ladylike sort of countenance."

The widow smiles a quiet smile, and says nothing further until we enter the drawing-room.

"Why, you have had it newly decorated!"

I exclaim, for the whole room is aglow with dark crimson ; curtains, carpet, chairs, lamps and walls having all a goodly percentage of my favourite colour.

“Do you admire my taste?” she asks, seating herself at the piano.

“Indeed I do,” I answer. “The *tout ensemble* is charming.”

“Thank you,” she says with a pleasant smile, and then she begins one of Beethoven’s sonatas. Her playing is full of *verve* and finish, and I sit perfectly delighted until she has finished, when she twirls round on the music stool and faces me.

“What do you think of the tone?”

“Perfect, Mrs. Wilson, and your execution is quite a musical treat.”

“Honestly?”

“Honestly, you play to my mind far better than many professionals.”

I stay and lunch with her, although I promised to be in time for luncheon at Woodbourn.



“And so you are going to remain some time with Mr. Barton?” she says.

“Yes. Sydney and I are very old friends, and as we haven’t seen each other for over two years, I daresay we shall not grow tired of each other for some weeks.”

“Grow tired of each other,” she exclaims. “You talk of us women being fickle and changeable, yet you men actually grow tired of each other in a few weeks.” And then she adds, after a slight pause and with several dimples, “Though to be sure, that’s not at all wonderful when one comes to think of it.”

“Now, now, Mrs. Wilson, you must not be so severe on us men. We are really not a bad lot taken for all in all—when you know us.”

“Yes, when we know you. By the way, when is Fanny Barton going to be married? She must be twenty-five.”

“Oh, no; not twenty-five.”

“How can you know, pray?” she asked sharply.

“Well, Sydney is only twenty-six, and there is, I know, four years between Fanny and him.”

“You seem to know all about it,” says the widow. “You men are always talking about women’s ages.” And she actually seemed angry.

“Always talking about women’s ages! My dear Mrs. Wilson, surely you know better than that? I simply said that Fanny Barton’s age——”

“Why, what on earth does it matter to me what her age is?” cried Mrs. Wilson, flashing with anger.

“No, certainly not,” I hasten to say. “I only wished to set you right as to her age.”

“Will you *please* say nothing further on the matter,” she exclaims, endeavouring to speak calmly.

In another moment the storm has blown over, and naught remains but laughing ripples.

"Now, I'm going to apologize for being such a rude, hasty hostess," she says. "Indeed, I know I *am* horribly rude occasionally, but, Mr. Brownlow, I am heartily ashamed of myself the next minute. I don't think rudeness is really natural to me."

"I'm sure it's not."

"Thank you," she says, with a bow of her little head. "I think my horrible fits of rudeness proceed from discontentment."

"Discontentment?" I say in surprise. "Why, surely you are not discontented, Mrs. Wilson?"

"Yes, I am," she answers sharply; "*awfully* discontented."

"How, and why, may I inquire?"

"Oh, I don't know; you see I sometimes feel very lonely and miserable, all by myself in this great house."

"Why don't you advertise for a companion?" I ask.

"Oh, ridiculous nonsense," she exclaims, flushing again.

"I don't see anything particularly nonsensical in the notion," I say.

"Don't you? Well, I do."

And now I rise to leave. It is three o'clock, and it will take me a good hour to get to Woodbourn.

"Let me have the waggonette brought round," Mrs. Wilson urges.

"No, thanks, I prefer walking. *Au revoir*."

"*Au revoir*—oh, tell Fanny I shall drive over to see her to-morrow."

"I shall."

Down the drive and out on to the road I go. Looking back I can see the house, on the rising ground, and the little widow standing on the steps. Look! there she is, waving her handkerchief. I raise my hat and wave *it*.

A delightful little woman!

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### AUNT MINERVA.

THE clock in the stables is chiming the hour of four as I enter Woodbourn gates. The drive—or avenue, as it would be called in Ireland—is lined each side by a low thorn hedge clipped to a flat top, and sentinelled now and again by a straight silver birch, a mountain ash, a poplar, or a lilac tree, all, alas! almost leafless now. And once or twice I notice the grey-green juniper tree, while in and out, and here and there through the bottom of the hedge, peeps the last of the wild clematis, the briony, and the purple-black berried nightshade, with just one yellow haulbit, solitary and depressed. Away out by the edge of the pond to the right rises the sweet-sedge,

now turned sober buff, and looking very melancholy in the setting sun.

“Why, what the deuce has kept you?” cries fair-haired Sydney as he meets me in the hall; “your traps have been here these three hours, and we waited luncheon fully an hour for you, you lazy beggar.”

“You must forgive me, Syd. I had to call at Virgemonte, and could not get away sooner.”

“And how is little Mrs. Wilson? As chatty and bright as ever?”

“Just as ever.”

By this time we are in the “Snuggery,” as Syd calls his smoking-room. Snug it is with its pretty Queen Anne fireplace, choice collection of books, and gems of water-colours, its odd-shaped easy-chairs and ottomans.

“The governor and Fanny are out walking,” Syd says as we sit opposite to each

other by the glowing fire. "We thought you would not come until night, when you were not here ere this. And how are you anyhow?"

"All right, but rather lonely—at least, I have been—but I expect Woodbourn will soon revive me."

"I hope so."

"And now, how have you been enjoying yourself?" I ask. "Flirting and feasting from Paris to Madrid, and from Rome to Vienna?"

"Yes," he says, "I've had a jolly time of it, but am not sorry to get home to old England once more. On my way through London I called at your hotel, but found you had gone to Hastings."

"How is your Aunt Minerva?" This query caused him to look serious for a moment.

"She's as cross and as great a hypochondriac as ever," he replies. "I tell you

honestly, Phil, Aunt Minerva is a confounded nuisance, and the skeleton in this otherwise 'appy 'ome."

"How unfortunate," I say.

"You may well say that. As for my father, she regularly worries his life out; nor can we keep a servant here for any time. They give notice one after another, stating as a reason that they 'cannot stand Miss Minerva's temper.' I wish to goodness the dad would assert himself."

"And does he not?"

"Not he. You know him of old—a hot-tempered, peppery old fellow, without the least firmness. Result, Aunt Minerva has her own way in everything."

"You surprise me, Syd. I never imagined you had to put up with quite so much as that."

"Ah, my dear boy, that's not half of it, but for goodness' sake let us talk of something else."



"Did you see your cousin Tom Pierce while in London?" I ask.

"Rather, why he is coming down here to-morrow."

"He is? By Jove! that is rare good news," I exclaim, for Tom is a prime favourite of mine.

"Yes, he is on some dramatic craze, and wants to revive the old pastoral drama, so I persuaded him to come down here and pick up rural characters and ideas."

"Has he ever been here before?"

"Never; it will be amusing to watch how Aunt Minerva takes him, especially when she hears that he is writing a play."

"Oh, she does not like playgoing then?"

"She goes almost into hysterics at the mention of theatres. It is her madness."

"Mad she certainly is, Syd, but which way—for or against the theatre?"

"Against it of course. She has never been inside a theatre in her life."

“Ah, that accounts for it.”

“And Fanny, who is passionately fond of the theatre, and a worshipper of Shakespeare, has to read his works by stealth.”

“Pleasant, Syd, very pleasant.”

And now Mr. Barton and Fanny return from their walk. John Barton is a white-whiskered, white-headed and ruddy-cheeked old chap, with steel-grey eyes, and, as Syd says, a very peppery temper. Fanny is tall, slight and graceful, with her poor mother's Grecian nose and hazel eyes. Both father and daughter are, like Syd, old friends, and welcome me cordially.

“We should not have gone out, Phil, had we known you were coming,” Fanny says. “But when you didn't put in an appearance at luncheon, we thought you would not turn up until night. Pray, what delayed you, sir?”

I explain my absence from the luncheon board, and inform her of Mrs. Wilson's promised visit on the morrow.

"Oh, the dear little woman," she exclaims, "she seems like sunshine in a shady place."

"Then you like her?"

"Who does not?" she answers.

"Who is that, dear?" asks her father.

"Mrs. Wilson of Virgemont, papa."

"Mrs. Wilson of Virgemont, indeed! The daughter of a pawnbroker."

It is a corkscrew-curled, wizen-faced, bony-handed lady who speaks. She has just entered, leaning on a stick, and stands glaring at me.

"The daughter of a pawnbroker!" cries Mr. Barton. "Why, confound it, Minerva, what are you talking about? The daughter of a stockbroker, you mean."

"Well, isn't it all the same?" she asks in a raspy voice.

"No, it's not all the same; what the devil do you mean by confounding one with the other, you old——"

"Hush, papa dear," says Fanny in a low

voice, and then aloud, "aunt, don't you know Philip Brownlow, or has he gone out of your recollection?"

I rise and advance towards her.

"Oh, dear, no; he hasn't grown out of my recollection at all. How do you do? Now I must leave this room; the sickening and disgusting odour of tobacco-smoke pervades the entire atmosphere."

Out she goes, and then calls Fanny to assist her upstairs. Sydney, who is smoking a cigarette, looks up at me with a "what-do-you-think-of-that?" expression in his eyes.

"You must excuse my sister's apparent brusqueness," says Mr. Barton; "you know her of old, Phil."

"Oh, I don't mind it a bit, Mr. Barton. I know how irritable and strange perpetual illness causes people to be."

"Perpetual illness be hanged!" mutters Syd; "come along and see your room, Phil."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### A SANGUINARY SUBJECT.

THANK Heaven, that raving maniac, Miss Minerva Barton, never appears at dinner, having her dinner, “generally some awful mess of sago or arrowroot” (Syd), in her own room. Consequently we four, Fanny, Mr. Barton, Syd and myself, had a jolly little dinner and a happy talk over times gone by. And then Fanny played us some sweet music. I wish Fanny was married. She would make a man’s home happy, I’m sure. I have been told that she has refused several suitors. The reason has also been whispered to me—said suitors were all country gentlemen fonder of foxhunting than music, art or the drama. Now Fanny is mad on all three, and does not care a straw about hunting or any

other country amusements. May some popular author (there are none *great* now, Paul Joyce is right), some successful dramatist or fashionable painter, woo and win handsome Fanny, who, by the way, inherits her grandmother's property in Essex. *She* doesn't mind the smell of tobacco-smoke a bit, and is now in the billiard-room marking for Syd and I, who are having a game, while Mr. Barton sits smoking a long pipe with a cherry-stem and a china bowl.

"Why do you say we are all mad, Phil?" she asks.

"All mad, who are all mad?" queries her father, looking from her to me. "Who are all mad, Phil, eh?"

"Every one," I answer.

"What, every one mad? Bosh!"

And I suppose he is about the maddest man I have ever met.

"Do you still hold that idea, then?" asks Syd.

"I do, indeed," I reply. "Every day makes me a firmer believer. We are all as mad as an army of hatters."

Fanny laughs outright at this, and the dear old squire eyes me suspiciously. He thinks *me* mad perhaps, but that is because I say something startling and strange to *him*. How many mad things, to *me*, have I heard *him* say !

"Then you believe that we have all a drop of mad blood in us?" Syd says.

"I believe that all our blood is mad," I answer, "and furthermore, I believe that we all have down deep in us a drop of the animal."

"Calls us animals now, Fanny," remarks Mr. Barton. "First, we're mad, now we are animals ! Go on, Phil, try and make us something else." And the old fellow puffs away good-humouredly, having, he thinks, said something very clever.

"Marker, call the play," says Syd.

“Thirty-eight plays twenty-nine, sir,” answers Fanny promptly.

“Of course we are all only a higher order of animals,” I say, whereupon the squire groans in the most approved parliamentary manner.

“I admit that,” Syd says; “but what do you mean by the term ‘drop of the animal?’”

“Drop of the fiddlestick!” exclaimed the squire.

“No, papa; let Phil explain,” laughs Fanny.

“Explain?” I say. “Certainly, and ere I proceed with the ‘one drop’ theory, I will give an example of a common madness amongst men. Now, Mr. Barton, you say you are not mad?”

“Decidedly I do.”

“I say that you are—very mad.”

Here all three laugh heartily, and the squire says, “I’ll tell you one thing, Phil; *you* are as mad as a March hare.”

“I *know* I am, and so are you.”



“Prove it,” he says.

“Certainly; allow me,” and I take the pipe from his hand. “What is this?”

“A pipe, of course.”

“That is, it is a cherrywood stem, affixed to a china cup.”

“Exactly.”

“What is this burning in it?”

“Why, tobacco of course.”

“And what is tobacco?”

“Tobacco!” exclaims Mr. Barton. “Why, bless my soul, don’t you know what tobacco is? It is a weed, of course.”

“And why have you placed this weed in this china cup and then set it alight?”

“Why, to smoke it, to be sure.”

“What do you call smoking it?”

“What do I call smoking it?” and my host gazes at me in astonishment. “Why, what does anybody call smoking?—drawing the smoke through the stem of the pipe and then puffing it out of your mouth, that’s smoking.”

“Is it a food?”

“Food; certainly not.”

“Is it a drink?”

“Drink; why, what are you talking about, Phil?”

“What makes you smoke at all?” I ask.

“Oh! how the deuce do I know?” cries the old chap hotly.

“Now, look here, Mr. Barton,” I say. “Here you sit, with a cherry-stick bored through the centre, and affixed to a china cup. In this cup you place a compound of American or Indian weeds, mixed more or less with saltpetre, and which physicians have declared over and over again to be rank poison to the system. This you light with a match, and forthwith commence sucking the poisonous smoke—smoke so poisonous, in fact, that a mouthful of it will sicken a non-smoker almost to death, while nicotin is certain death if swallowed in its purity. Well, this smoke, as I have said, you suck

through the stem, and then puff out again. And then you call yourself a sane man. Do you think there is any sense in that?"

"By Jove, Phil!" exclaims Syd. "I think there is something in your theory, after all."

"You never explained it like that before, Phil," Fanny says. "Now, papa, what have you got to say?"

"Why, everybody smokes," cries her father.

"Quite so," I say. "And everybody is mad."

While talking I have been also attending to my game, and have won, beating Syd by seven. We adjourn to the drawing-room and there Fanny asks me to explain my "one drop" theory. So, all seated round the fireplace, I begin:

"My meaning of the term one drop of an animal is this: I maintain that each of us has something of the nature of one or other animal. This drop never asserts itself save in cases of the direst distress."

“How do you mean?” asks Syd.

“We will suppose we know four wealthy gentlemen—we will call them Brown, Jones, Robinson and Smith. Remember, these men have never known what it is to want for anything; nor have they ever known any serious trouble. Result—they are jovial and good-natured, loving husbands, kind fathers, truest of friends, and all the rest of it. Now we will suppose that by some extraordinary and sudden stroke of fortune, or rather *mis*-fortune, all four are bereft of all their wealth, all their children, wives, homes, and are, in point of fact, left penniless, starving, and with very little clothing—crouching, say, in the middle of some bare heath in pelting rain. Now understand, these four men have now no money, no friends, no food and no shelter, nor have they the slightest idea of where to look for any. Now watch Brown; do you see how the famished look in his eye slowly gives place to one of fierceness? Listen to him:

‘Must *I* who have been accustomed to all the luxury, and pleasure, and happiness in life—must I die of cold and hunger? No, by Heaven, no! Where are all the friends whom I have lavished my wealth upon? Curse them! They leave me here to starve. Starve? No, I will *not* starve and die while others have plenty. I am mad with hunger.’—See him rise and prowl along in search of food. The first man he meets he will attack and kill for the purpose of securing any money his victim may possess. Brown, you see, has a drop of the wolf in him. Now look at Jones: see the famished look give place to one of determination as he rises and gazes boldly around. Then he says, ‘What! am I going to die of starvation on this heath while I have hands to work with? No! I will trudge to the next town and look for some work—I don’t care what it is; I will sweep the streets, or break stones, as long as I am paid for it. I’m not going to give in.’—And away he goes

towards the town. Jones has a drop of the lion in him. Now we come to Robinson. Just watch Robinson—*his* famished look slowly gives place, not to the look of fierceness which we noticed in Brown, nor the bold determined look of Jones, but to a *cunning* look. ‘I’m not going to stand this much longer,’ he mutters, as the cunning expression deepens. ‘Let me see—if I want to save myself from starvation and death, I must get some money forthwith. There’s that old glutton, Alderman Goggle, whom I have often given a good dinner to. He won’t know me now—no, curse him; but I think I can copy his signature. Yes. *I’ll* get some money.’—And off he goes and forges a cheque. Robinson has a drop of the fox in him. Last of all comes poor Smith. His famished look remains, but gradually becomes mixed with hopeless despair. ‘Oh! my God!’ he cries. ‘Is this the end of all my greatness? Left to die on a wild heath, with-

out money, food or friends; nowhere to go, and no one to look to; hopeless and weary. Let me die.'—And he lies down and dies. Smith had a drop of the sheep in him. Remember this: all those four men while in prosperity would have been very much insulted indeed if you hinted that they were sheep, or wolves, or foxes. They were quite ignorant of the fact themselves. And had they not met with dire misfortune, we would have been ignorant of the fact also."

"Then you believe that no man can be fathomed until he is in misfortune and trouble," says Syd.

"No man knows what he is himself, or what good or evil is in him, until he finds himself reduced to poverty and starvation."

"Who's starving?" asks Mr. Barton, starting up.

He has been quietly sleeping during my lecture!

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### TOM PIERCE ARRIVES.

THE Woodbourn preserves are among the best stocked in the whole county, and Syd and myself have had splendid sport to-day. SPORT! Yes, have we not slaughtered a lot of poor devils of birds in cold blood (the air was frosty), and have we not returned from the fray terribly tired, and consequently have we not enjoyed ourselves like English madmen?

“Why did you not say where you could be found at two o’clock?” Fanny asks. “We could have sent a nice lunch to you both.”

“Never thought of it,” answers Syd; “we had no intention of quitting the near grounds and thought we could turn in here for



luncheon. But by degrees we wandered further and further, until we found ourselves, keepers and all, three miles from anywhere."

"Little Mrs. Wilson was here in the morning," Fanny tells me. "How pretty she looks in crimson."

"Oh! was she in crimson?" I exclaim. "Yes, she does look rather well in that colour."

"Little Mr. Towers called while she was here, and both remained to lunch," she continues.

"Oh, indeed," I say; "did they go away together?"

"Yes. Do you know, Phil, I think little Mr. Towers is a bit gone there," she says with a knowing smile.

"Oh, ridiculous!" I exclaim. "Little Towers! a little fool! What would *he* do with such a wife?"

"What would he do?" Here Fanny broke into a merry laugh, and ran off to dress for dinner, while I follow suit.

But the idea of little Towers thinking seriously of the widow! No, it's impossible—he could not think seriously of anything. Ah! *now* I remember Mrs. Wilson asking me if I did not think little Towers “nice-looking.” Can she really—well, why not? Now that I come to think of it, Towers is just about the sort of man she *would* marry. And did she not get very angry in London when I gave her a hint on the question? Yes, and he called to-day while she was here? *That* was arranged between them of course.

Oh, dear, what will I do for some pretty little creature to talk scandal to me, and to quarrel with me, and to make it all up again, if little Mrs. Wilson marries?

Tom Pierce arrives in time for dinner. He has never seen his uncle (his mother's brother) before. In fact, the only one of the family he had ever met previously is Sydney.

The old squire likes his nephew from the first—there is a frank, honest and decidedly humorous style about Tom, which seems to carry him through everything, and to make him a prime favourite with everybody.

I wonder how he will get on with his Aunt Minerva? I hope I will see the meeting between them! How he does rattle away to be sure! Music, art, literature, and above all, the drama, he dilates on with delightful freshness and originality.

Fanny sits opposite to him, with an amused and interested expression. At last she has some one who can talk about plays and theatres.

“Sydney tells me you write plays yourself,” she says to him.

“Oh, yes, I *write* plays, fair cousin,” he answers; “in fact I have written about thirty plays.”

“What’s that you say?” inquires his uncle. “Written thirty plays.”

"Yes, uncle."

"Have I ever heard of them?"

"No," answers his nephew gravely, "you see they are not so common as Shakespeare's."

"You mean they have never been performed at all, Tom," Fanny says.

"Quite correct," he replies. "The *theatrical* world knows not its greatest men."

"I never hear of a new tragedy being produced now a days. How is that, Tom, eh?" asks the squire.

"Why is there no new tragedy produced? The reason is very simple, my dear uncle—many new comedies answer the same purpose. Oh, I say, Phil! you remember little Jenkins, the low comedian?"

"Yes. What about him?"

"Well, he has written a play called 'Dynamite,' and has gone on tour with it, or rather, he commenced his tour with it; but the first theatre he opened at he blew

the roof off, besides knocking the orchestra off their chairs; fact."

"Bless my soul!" exclaims the squire.  
"How did he manage to do that?"

"Well, you see, uncle, in the play, which Jenkins assured me there was millions in, there was one great and entirely new and novel scene—it was never seen on any stage before, and it is more than remotely probable it will never be played on any stage again—for this scene represented the blowing up of all the characters, save the hero and heroine, by dynamite. 'You see,' said Jenkins to me, 'in all other dramas, new and old, the villains are either shot, drowned, stabbed or arrested, if they don't take poison; but in my play I will have the villains—and they are all villains in it but two—blown up into smithereens by dynamite. I fancy that will bring down the house,' he added, and it *did*, or anyway it brought down the roof."

“What has become of him?” I ask.

“He had to run or the authorities would have been down on him, and he is now in the north playing *Hamlet* with a ghost show, under an assumed name. Ah! it will all blow over in time, and then poor Jenkins can venture back to town.”

“What is this new actress like, this Miss Fayncourt?” Fanny asks. “She seems to be all the rage now.”

“Yes, and she deserves all the praise she receives,” answers Tom. “She is lovely to look upon, charming to converse with, and a splendid actress.”

“Fayncourt,” says Syd. “Oh! I saw her *carte* in the Strand windows; she is certainly a beautiful woman.”

“I should think so!” cries Tom. “And can’t she sit a horse! You should have seen her in the Row last season. Follows the hounds too, whenever she has time.”

“Does she, by Jove!” exclaims Sydney.

"I should like to meet her in the field," and he laughs.

"You may some day," says Tom.

"I don't think actresses make good wives for country gentlemen," remarks the squire.

"No, no, I'm sure they don't. Too fond of London tinsel and all that sort of thing."

"Rubbish!" exclaims Tom, while Syd, Fanny and I prepare for a storm.

"What's that you say?" asks the squire sharply.

"Rubbish!" answers Tom calmly. "That's what I say."

"Then what the deuce do you mean, sir?" exclaims his uncle in a fume.

"Oh! he means he does not agree with you, papa dear," Fanny says soothingly.

"Yes, uncle, that is just it," Tom adds. "You and I agree to differ on the subject of actresses."

"Very well, sir; but you know nothing about the subject, nothing whatever," and

the squire looked at Syd and myself for applause.

“I don’t pretend to know so much about actresses as you do, uncle,” Tom remarks, “certainly not; you have had more to do with them I daresay.”

“Why, what the devil do you mean, sir?” cries the squire, almost choking; but a burst of laughter from us all soon brings him back his good humour.

“I wish Aunt Minerva was here,” whispered Syd to me.

I am looking forward to some fun in this delightful madhouse.





## CHAPTER XXX.

### TOM MEETS HIS AUNT.

OFF the morning-room is a small writing-closet, the door of which is hung with one of those Oriental reed curtains—those curious arrangements which can be seen through, and which render the objects seen quite visionary. Well, here I sit writing in this ante-room as the morning sun streams through the painted window. It is this subdued painted light which makes the outer room so bright by contrast, and which accordingly allows of my seeing every object there distinctly through this reed curtain.

Presently I hear voices. Fanny and Tom have entered and are sitting by one of the windows.

“And so you are a real live author, Tom?”  
Fanny says.

“Yes, I scorn to deceive you, madam, I *ham*.”

“Well, I’m glad that some of the family have brains,” continues Fanny. “I’m sure we Woodbourn Bartons are about as dull as a funeral.”

“Ah! we must try and wake the echoes of mirth—make the welkin ring,” says Tom.

“And then poor Aunt Minerva is so peevish and crotchety,” Fanny tells him. “You know she is such an invalid.”

“Indeed! What’s the matter with her?”

“Oh, I don’t know—general breakdown of the constitution, I think.”

“General break *up*, you mean,” observes Tom.

“Well, it’s all the same, isn’t it?”

“I believe the old lady, my Aunt Minerva, is not a lover of the muses?” Tom remarks.

“Oh, for goodness’ sake don’t mention anything about plays or theatres to her,” cries Fanny. “It is like shaking a red rag before

a bull. And the worst of it is, she has made papa nearly as bad as herself, and now when in town he will never take me to the theatre. Isn't it a shame?"

"Shame?" exclaims Tom. "That's not the word for it—it's a scandal."

"By the way, Tom, you have never seen Aunt Minerva yet?"

"No," answers Tom, "that is a pleasure which is in store for me."

Here the old lady in question is heard calling "Fanny! Fanny!"

"Gracious, here she is," exclaims Fanny, laughing, and running out of the room.

Tom takes out a pocket-book and begins writing—evidently making notes for his new pastoral comedy. Enter Miss Minerva. She does not observe Tom, who in his turn does not hear or see her, being too busy with his pencil. She sinks into a chair.

"Where *is* that girl?" she exclaims aloud. "Am I never to have any one come to me

when I require them? Oh! what a lot of brutes they are. They would see me die before any of them would stir hand or foot to assist me."

All this uttered in a harsh, peevish, grating voice is quite enough to make Tom aware of his aunt's presence. He sits surveying her—mentally "taking her bearings" for a moment—then he gives a loud:

"Ahem!" This makes the old lady jump nearly out of her chair.

"A man!" she exclaims, glaring at him in astonishment.

"Perfectly correct, my dear madam," observes Tom with a placid smile. "*I am* a man."

"Who are you, man?" asks Miss Minerva, almost choking with indignation.

"Who am I?" repeats Tom with well-acted astonishment. "Ha! ha! ha! That's good—that *is* good!" and he leans back laughing. This seems to rouse the old lady to fury.

“Answer me, *man*; who are you, and where have you come from?” she exclaims.

“Good heavens!” cries Tom in bewilderment. “And is there one civilized being who does not know *me*? Why, there is not a devil——”

“Sir!” cries his aunt.

“A printer’s devil, I mean,” continues her precious nephew. “Not the old boy—oh, dear, no.”

“Once for all, sir, who and what are you?” cries Miss Minerva, gasping with rage.

“What am I? A poet, a dramatist and amateur actor.”

“Ah!” gasps Miss Minerva, “a play-actor; leave the house, man; how dare you enter here? Do you hear me? Leave the house at once, or I shall call one of the servants. How dare you presume to enter here?” and she trembles with passion.

“Now look here, my dear madam,” says

Tom, "I don't know who you are or what you are, nor do I care the husk of a nut, but I am a theatrical man, and I won't hear the profession run down."

"Young man!" screams Miss Minerva, starting to her feet.

"Old woman!" answers Tom, springing to *his* feet.

At the words "old woman" Miss Minerva gives a loud piercing scream and is about to fall, when Tom runs and catches her. In doing so he knocks her wig clean off, leaving her bald head bare to the full light of day. This sets her screaming louder than ever. In an instant, Fanny, the squire and Sydney appear on the scene. The squire stands transfixed, with hair on end, at the sight; Sydney falls into a sofa laughing, while Fanny goes to assist her aunt.

"Oh! take me away to my room and let me die," exclaims the latter, as Fanny re-wigs her and takes her arm. "Turn that madman

out of the house instantly," and she quits the room on Fanny's arm.

Tom, quite calm and cool, resumes his seat by the window, and when the squire recovers his speech he says: "What is the meaning of this? Tom—Sydney—will somebody speak? Damn it, will somebody say something?"

But Sydney sits with eyes full of fun gazing at Tom, and Tom sits, cool and comfortable, gazing at his uncle. The latter, after glaring from one to the other, cries:

"Damn it, you look like a pair of dumb idiots! Will you please explain——"

"The meaning of the impressive tableau which you witnessed on entering," Tom interrupts. "Certainly, my dear uncle; take a chair. The fact is, my aunt and myself were having a little pleasant *tête-à-tête* on things in general. In the course of our conversation I happened to mention something about theatres, when to my horror she was immediately seized with a sudden weakness. I ran to her assist-

ance, and in doing so had the misfortune to disarrange her head-dress."

Sydney's laughter is infectious. I find myself laughing behind my curtains, and then the squire breaks out into a hearty "Ha! ha! ha!"

"Well, upon my soul, it will do her good," he cries, and just at this moment a servant comes in to tell him that "Miss Minerva wishes to see him."

"All right," he says, "say I will be there presently. I suppose she wants to say good-bye before she dies for the hundred and fifty-fifth time," he says, and then leaves the room.

"I suppose she will order him to have me hanged, drawn and quartered," remarks Tom. "I say, Syd, wasn't that a grand scene?"

"I should think it was," *I* reply, walking *through* the curtains.

"Oh, did you see it all?" he asks.

'Every bit of it.'



“I’ll put it in a comedy,” he continues.  
“It will make a splendid curtain for a second act.”

And then we all three go for a gallop.

“Of course it was awfully rude to speak to my aunt as I have done,” whispered Tom to me while waiting for the horses; “but she has put the squire up to boycotting theatres, which is simply cruel to Fanny.”



## CHAPTER XXXI.

### MISS MINERVA ASSISTS AT A MATINÉE.

MISS MINERVA has not appeared downstairs since her encounter with Tom yesterday morning. Good; a little of that elderly spinster goes a very long way.

By the way, yesterday evening during dinner I noticed that one of the servants looked too short for his livery, or the livery was too long for him. I also saw that he was nervous and awkward and altogether ignorant of the duties of a table attendant. Later on Sydney told me that the man was really a dog trainer whom he had picked up in London and brought down to Woodbourn as a trainer of pointers and setters. Delightful Miss Minerva had bullied one of the footmen so that he left without

giving any notice, and Ben Bantim—the aforesaid trainer—was hastily put into his livery.

“He is a capital dog trainer,” continued Syd, “but an awful failure as a footman.”

“Yes,” observed Tom, who was listening, “I never saw a worse footman in a bad farce.”

Breakfast is over, and I sit writing a letter to Paul Joyce in the little writing room. Through the reed curtain I can see Fanny in the next room, as she sits by the fire looking over a book. Presently enters to her Ben Bantim with a coal scuttle. His troubled woe-begone face is a study.

“Is the fire all right, miss?” he asks.

“Yes, Ben; have the night-keepers finished their breakfasts yet?”

(The squire has four men on the watch for poachers all night, and after giving them their breakfasts allows them to go home and sleep, or do anything else they please until evening.)

“No, miss; they’s not done feedin’ yet,” says Ben. “They’re a-tuckin’ in still.”

“They are *what?*” asks Fanny in bewilderment.

“A-tuckin’ in, miss,” continues Ben; “a feedin’ away like one o’clock. The mornin’ hair is a powerful doctor for the happetite. Lor’ bless you, Miss Fanny, when I was in London, in the tyke line, I used to get hup at five on a summer’s mornin’, and when nine o’clock came, couldn’t I put a pound of steak across my chest!”

“A pound of steak across your chest!” echoes Fanny. “Why what in the world do you mean by that?”

“Why, I means that I het it with gusto, miss.”

“Oh,” exclaims Fanny laughing, “I really thought you were alluding to a poultice.”

“Why, miss,” continues the footman’s understudy, “after taking hout the dorgs from five till nine for a constitutional, I used to be as ’ungry as a bloomin’ ’unter.”

"A blooming *what*, Ben?"

"*Hunter*, miss," answers Ben, emphasizing the "h" as if his life depended upon it.

"Ben, you must endeavour to avoid using cockney expressions, at least while acting as footman. Of course it does not matter so much in the kennel."

"The kennels, miss!" exclaims Ben. "Ah, that's my proper place, miss; I ain't in my element as a flunky, and that's a fact. Put me in the kennels with the tykes and I'm all there. You might ask the boss—I mean the master, miss—to turn me on to the tykes again."

"Oh, you won't have to endure your agony for very long," laughs Fanny. "We expect to have a new footman by to-morrow. Then, Ben, you are free to return to your four-legged friends."

"An' a good job too, miss," says Ben as he retires.

My letter finished, I go and sit by the fire and have a chat with Fanny.

“Why where are Syd and Tom?” I ask.

“Syd has gone to transact some business with the steward,” Fanny answers, “and as for Tom, I expect he is too busy over his note-book to think of any one.”

This is said in a tone of pique. Ho, ho! is that how the land lies?

“Do you know, Phil, I would give the world to be an actress,” she continues with a laugh. “How I should like to play Lady Macbeth, and have columns of print all about myself and my dresses, like Ellen Terry.”

“Ah, yes; that would be something.”

“Or I should be happy if I could even play Juliet at a *matinée*, like a professional beauty. ‘On Saturday next, at two o’clock, Shakespeare’s tragedy of “Romeo and Juliet.” Juliet, Miss Fanny Barton.’ Fancy that announcement in blue type on pink paper

hanging in the windows of all the cigar shops and public houses in the neighbourhood of the Strand!" and she laughs a merry laugh at the notion. "I wonder what papa would say?"

"And your aunt?" I query.

"Oh, Phil, I really believe she would have a serious fit of some kind," and Fanny becomes quite grave at the thought.

Presently Tom enters and sits down between Fanny and me, as he rattles away one humorous theatrical anecdote after another. As I have stated before, his spirits are infectious, and ere many moments he has Fanny and myself—especially Fanny—as lively and gay as himself.

Suddenly he asks Fanny: "Do you know the 'Pirate's Bride?'"

"Yes," exclaims Fanny; "do you?"

"Backwards," he answers. "Suppose we have a scene from it," and up he jumps. "Phil will be the Audience."

“Agreed!” cries Fanny, also jumping up.  
“What scene shall we have?”

“Oh, the second one, where Lorisimo returns to seek his bride. But stop—what will Lorisimo do for a cloak and hat? He must have a cloak and hat, you know.”

“I have it!” Fanny says. “Put on your dressing-gown and I’ll run and get you Aunt Minerva’s old sun hat.”

“The very thing,” he cries, and away they both run. Dear delightful mad creatures!

Presently they return—Tom in a gorgeous blue satin dressing-gown and Fanny with an enormous straw hat, which she places on his head, laughing merrily all the time. Tom now looks as much unlike a pirate and as much like a Chinese gentleman depicted on a tea chest as it is possible to conceive.

“Now what about the Bride’s father?” he asks. “The Bride must have a father.”

“Won’t Phil do?” Fanny suggests.



“Phil, no—he’s the audience; we can’t make the audience act.”

At this moment Ben enters to have another look at the fire. Seeing Tom in gorgeous array, he stands staring at him open-mouthed.

“Here,” says Tom to him; “were you ever on the boards?”

“Do you mean board-wages, sir?” asks Ben.

“No, no; did you ever take part in a piece?”

“A piece of what, sir?” queries Ben, evidently mystified.

“Mr. Pierce means, have you ever acted in a play, or ever seen one?” Fanny explains.

“Oh, yes, miss, I saw the ‘Forty Thieves’ played.”

“Very good, then you have some idea of acting,” Tom says, slipping some money into the man’s hand. “There’s your salary in advance. I want you to go behind that

door, and when I cry ‘Ha, ha!’ you rush out and I kill you.”

“Kill me!” cries Ben, looking from Tom to Fanny, and from her to Tom again.

“Yes, yes, but only in fun, you know,” says the Pirate. “Now to your post; but stay, you don’t look fierce enough.” Here he goes into the writing-room and returns with a piece of blotting-paper rolled up and dipped in ink, with which he proceeds to paint a black moustache on Ben.

“But, sir——” the latter begins.

“Stop,” cries Tom; “don’t move a muscle or you’ll spoil the effect. There, that’s lovely. Now to your post behind the door, and remember the ‘Ha, ha!’”

Ben goes behind the door, evidently not half pleased with the whole arrangement, and Tom “goes off,” while Fanny, who had already “gone off,” now comes on—*enters*, to use the proper term. She is supposed to be in great anxiety about her husband,

and as near as I can follow her this is what she says (in very tragic tones):

“ Ah me, the nights still grow apace,  
 Why tarries my Lorisimo ?  
 Where may he be ? Perchance  
 Beneath the ocean's flood  
 Full forty fathoms deep.”

Here Tom stamps “ outside ” at an awful rate, which causes the Bride to observe :

“ Footsteps in the corridor!  
 Should this be my father,  
 I must dissemble.”

And so saying the Bride retires to the appointed corner, while the audience gives a round of applause. Enter Lorisimo as if he was walking on thistles in his bare feet. I don't know whether he or Ben—who looks at him from his post behind the door, just as one would look upon the antics of a harmless lunatic—is the funniest sight. This is what Lorisimo says in a voice evidently drawn from his boots :

“ Methinks I heard a moan.  
 It might have been the music of the draughts—”

“Winds,” says Fanny, in a stage whisper from her corner, and Lorisimo thus corrected says :

“It might have been the music of the winds  
Which sweep around the castle.”

Here the Pirate bold begins walking on thistles again, and the Bride coming forward cries :

“Who goes there ?”

Whereupon Lorisimo stops his promenading and cries :

“That voice !”

Which causes the Bride to immediately observe :

“That form !”

This seems to be quite enough for Lorisimo, who exclaims forthwith :

“’Tis she !

Come to my arms, my beautiful bride !”

Thus saying, they rush into each other’s arms, and as they embrace their Aunt Minerva

walks in! With a scream of horror and astonishment she falls into a chair. Out rushes Fanny, while Ben, quite forgetful of his fierce appearance, runs to Miss Minerva's assistance. On seeing his inky face she screams louder, and he bolts—and all this time Tom, who has thrown off hat and gown, is rolling about on the sofa with laughter.

I—I follow Ben's example and bolt!



## CHAPTER XXXII.

### *VIVE L'AMOUR.*

By-AND-BY Tom and I are seated smoking in the snugery, when the squire enters, hair positively on end with fury. Catching sight of Tom he exclaims, "Ah, just the man I wanted, and you too, Phil—you are both men of the world, men of brains—now tell me what's to be done, eh? What's to be done, sir, damme, that's the question?"

"What's the matter, uncle?" asks Tom.

"Am I master in my own house, or am I not, eh? Answer me that, sir?" cries the old fellow, pacing up and down the room.

"Of course you are, uncle," replies Tom, winking at me. "An Englishman's house is his castle."

“Right, sir,” exclaims the squire, stopping and bringing his hand down with a bang on the side table, “an Englishman’s house is his castle, and by the Lord Harry I won’t stand it any longer!”

“I applaud your sentiments, my dear uncle,” says his worthy nephew.

“Would you believe it, Phil,” he exclaims, turning to me with a wild glare in his mad eyes, “would you believe it if I were to inform you that my sister, my confounded sister, sir, is playing the very devil with my naturally calm and peaceful temper?”

“Oh, shame, shame upon her!” cries Tom, with tremendous indignation in his tones.

“Will you believe it, Tom,” cries the squire, glaring more than ever, “when I tell you that she has just been abusing me like a pickpocket because I wouldn’t order you, her sister’s and my sister’s son, out of the house?”

“Good heavens!” exclaims Tom, looking quite astounded.

“Out of my own house!”

“Merciful powers!” cries Tom, looking thunderstruck.

“You may well express astonishment, Tom,” exclaims the squire, “but never mind, there will be an end to all this in the future. I *shall* be master in my own house! I’ll begin at once.”

“Do, uncle.”

“I will, Tom. I’ll order dinner an hour earlier than usual! I’ll let her see she can’t do as she likes.”

And away he goes to issue the momentous order to the cook.

“I think you have said that we are all mad,” remarks Tom.

“I have indeed,” I reply.

“Then, upon my soul! I believe you are right,” he exclaims.

“Why of course I am, my dear boy. Do



you for one moment think that if your uncle, for instance, was a sane man, he would tolerate this old lady interfering in his domestic arrangements?"

"Certainly not!" cries Tom; "Fanny is, or should be, mistress of Woodbourn. As for enduring Aunt Minerva's continual presence, why, I'd rather be doomed to write jokes for a Scotch editor."

"I've long been of opinion that something should be done for old maids," I say.

"How?" asks Tom. "Do you mean in the way of providing husbands for them?"

"Yes; I think the government ought to take the matter in hand, and have a list of eligible and willing men—matrimonial volunteers—to bestow upon all spinsters who should apply."

"It would never do, Phil; it would be certain to break down."

"Why?" I ask.

“The demand would outrun the supply. The list of men should be as long as Oxford Street.”

“Well, and so it could be if the government acted at all in a generous spirit. Let them give each man who marries a spinster over forty years of age, a gold medal.”

“And a pension,” added Tom.

“Well, yes, where the spinster has not an income. Besides, you forget, Tom, that there are plenty of old maids who would not marry at all.”

“Oh, bosh!” he exclaims. “Don’t try and make me believe that.”

“I tell you there are; they are a small minority, it is true, but still they exist: women who have loved and lost. And don’t you mind what shallow scribblers and sceptics say about the non-existence of love. It lives immortal, Tom, and its home is woman’s heart. That idle talk of drawing-room noodles, about women being fickle, is

wrong, very wrong. Mind you, I don't say that the tribe of girls brought to town every May to be sold to the highest bidder, know what love means. But they *will* some day, and then God help their husbands! For I tell you this, Tom—if a woman loves a man she will let him know it. If he happens to be her husband, so much the better—he has a willing slave whose sole desire is to please him; but if the man is not her husband, why, then so much the worse for her husband. A woman in love will barter everything for the possession of the man she loves.”

“But don't you think their love is apt to cool?”

“Never, once loved, always loved, with them. They may leave you because you have grossly insulted or injured them; they may never speak to you, or even deign to notice your presence again, but they love you all the same. They cannot help it.”

“I suppose you are right,” says Tom : “In fact, in the words of Moore :

“The heart that once truly loved, never forgets,  
But as truly loves on to the close ;  
As the sunflower turns to its god when he sets,  
The same look which it turned when he rose.’

I don’t think those are the correct words, but they will do.”

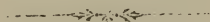
Presently we take a stroll towards the stables, and when passing by the kennel door overhear Ben talking to one of his fellow-servants :

“Strike me merry ! Ted, there’s that young toff from London—him with the straw-coloured hair—an’ if he didn’t get me into a bloomin’ row this mornin’, may I be poleaxed. What do you think ! Him an’ Miss Fanny was playactin’, an’ he cops me, an’ before I could say wayoh, he had me bloomin’ kisser all over ink—straight ! Then he tells me to stop behind the door till he says ‘Ha, ha !’ an’ then, says he, ‘run out,

an' I'll kill you.' 'Not much,' says I to meself; 'I'm not having any now.' 'Of course,' says he, 'it's only in fun.' 'Right you are, cockey,' says I, an' goes behind the bloomin' door. You should pipe his togs! Strike me handsome! but they *were* saucy—oh, my! An' ain't he got a comic chivey chase? Well, him an' Miss Fanny—good luck to her, *she's* all right—begins doin' Irvin' an' Terry all over the shop, an' ends by havin' a coonoodle, when who should turn up but the old Dutch clock. Wayoh! didn't we all make tracks!"

"Rather graphic in his description of you," I say to Tom, as we walk on.

"Yes, and also of my aunt—'Old Dutch lcock' is good."



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### A LETTER FROM PAUL.

I AM beginning to grow tired of bang-bang-banging at fur and feathers, having had over a week of it. Some fellows there are who never grow tired of slaughter, but I am not one of them. Enough is as good as a feast, and a great deal better. But we have had other amusements besides shooting and billiards—namely, a dinner-party and a Cinderella dance, both got up in honour of Tom and myself—what madness! Dinner-parties I detest, dances I abhor, which must be my excuse for describing neither. Tom and Fanny are eternally gossiping in low tones in the conservatory. That conservatory will soon be worn out. The squire has had several more rows with his sweet sister,

and still he is not happy. The only people in the whole house who are at all accountable for their actions are Syd, myself and a collie dog, and even we three are mad enough, in all conscience !

Little Mrs. Wilson drives over to luncheon, brimful of gossip, the chief item of which is the non-arrival of the Duchess of Stanton from town. In fact, it appears her grace has suddenly started for the Continent.

“Just fancy!” says the widow, “going over to France or Italy—for no one seems to know exactly *where* she has gone—while the duke is away! And, moreover, one would imagine she would have been eager to get back to the Castle, now that her uncle and cousin are residing so close to it.” And the little widow smiles.

“Have you seen these new arrivals yet?” asks Fanny; “*what* is the gentleman’s name?”

“Butts!” replies the widow; “nice name, isn’t it?”

“What’s that, what’s that?” queries the squire, looking towards the widow. “Butts, did you say? *Butts!* bless my soul, what an extraordinary name!”

“Do well for a farce,” observes Tom.

“Yes,” Syd says; “you should take a note of it, Tom, and copyright it at once.”

“But, have you called on Mr. Butts and his niece yet, Mrs. Wilson?” Fanny asks.

“No,” she answers, tossing her little head, “I am waiting for them to call upon *me*.”

“By the way, did Towers send you those cuttings, Mrs. Wilson?” I ask her.

“Oh! indeed he did, and moreover, sent his gardener to superintend their bedding, *though* I think *my* gardener was mortally offended. Now, was it not awfully kind of Mr. Towers?” and the widow looks across the table at me, in that wide-open-eyed way which I have noticed before.

“Very,” I say; “but little Towers was always a great lady’s man. Do you remem-



ber our conversation in London concerning him?"

The widow becomes very dimply indeed, but does not reply.

When she is leaving, and while all the others stand admiring the natty little phaeton and pair of well-matched ponies, she turns to me at the door and says: "And pray, how much longer are you going to remain here spooning Fanny?"

"What!" I exclaim in astonishment, "*I?*"

"Yes, you," she says looking straight into my eyes.

"My dear Mrs. Wilson, for goodness' sake don't admit such an idea into your head—it is unfair both to Fanny and myself."

"Do you mean to tell me I am mistaken?" she asks sharply.

"Certainly I do. Now, had you spoken so to Tom Pierce, you would have been nearer the mark."

“Well, don’t let us quarrel,” she says smiling and dimpling; “you know I was only quizzing. Good-bye for the present.”

In another moment she is driving down the avenue. But, fancy her thinking me in love with Fanny!

\* \* \* \* \*

The following letter has just reached me *viâ* Brownlow House. It is from Paul Joyce, and is dated from his chambers in Caxton’s Inn.

“DEAR PHIL,

“It is a curious fact, and one I cannot quite account for, but ever since the night you dined with me and spoke of *her* I have been perfectly miserable. I thought I had forgotten all about her, but alas! I woefully deceived myself. Night after night do I sit up until the ‘small hours, thinking of the past and of the hopeless mistakes I committed. What a lesson my life has been—*would* be if printed and published! Here

is my whole happiness wrecked through my own folly—my own idiotic pride. No, *not* pride—pride is a noble vice. My vice was vanity. O, good Heavens! if I could but recall the past—bring back even one short hour of my existence when *she* was by! But it is one of the unalterable rules of this life, Phil, that man never knows how momentous the present is until it becomes the irretrievable past. Too late! too late! Can you not hear the funeral bell toll those words every other day? Morning, noon and night, that bell is ringing in my ears. God help me!

“My ‘mission’ has gone clean out of my head for the time being, but I *must* pull myself together. This won’t do at all, another month of it and I would shoot myself. I am going to run down and see you soon. Write and say *when*.

“Your old friend,

“PAUL JOYCE.”

Poor Paul! He is in a very bad way. I must write and tell him to come to Brownlow as soon as he likes. What an inquisitive ass I was to touch on the old scar that day. We men are frequently as cruelly and recklessly curious as the most womanly woman.

END OF VOLUME I.

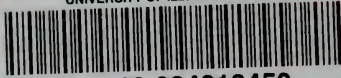








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